

9



Domestic Girlfriend

KEI SASUGA

D O M E X G I R L

Domestic Girlfriend

9

D O M E
G I R L

KEI SASUGA

DOME GIRL

9

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...YOU USED
TO DATE
FROM THIS
SCHOOL, BY
CHANCE?

SOME-
ONE...

CHAPTER 75: CONTEST



HUH
?!

YOU HAD A
GIRLFRIEND,
NAT-CHAN?!







A TEACHER-STUDENT
RELATIONSHIP, HUH?

THAT'S
QUITE A
SCANDALOUS
SECRET
YOU HAVE.

...!



SO I
OVERHEARD
YOUR CONVERSATION.

I WAS READING
ANTHOLOGIES
FROM PAST
YEARS WHEN
YOU CAME INTO
THE ROOM
YESTERDAY,



WHAT DO
YOU HOPE
TO GAIN
FROM
THIS?

...
AND?



WHY DON'T
WE HAVE
A LITTLE
CONTEST?



YES.

INVOLVING
OUR FORTE,
NOVELS.

A CON-
TEST?



HOWEVER,
THERE'S
NOTHING
EXCITING
ABOUT JUST
COMPARING
OUR
SCORES.

HMM
...

WE'LL BOTH
ENTER A
PIECE, AND
WHOEVER
RANKS
HIGHER
WINS THE
MATCH.

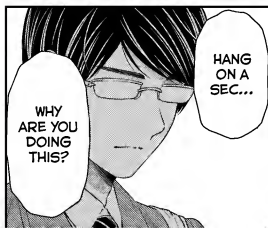
THE AMATEUR
SUBMISSIONS
DEADLINE FOR
THE SPRING
EDITION OF
BUNGEIKATO
IS AT THE END
OF THIS MONTH.



WELL,

BUT IF
YOU DON'T
ACCEPT MY
CHALLENGE,
I'LL JUST
EXPOSE YOUR
SECRET TO
THE WORLD.

IT MAY
SEEM
LIKE I'M
GIVING
YOU AN
OPTION,



WHY
ARE YOU
DOING
THIS?

HANG
ON A
SEC...



LET'S SAY
WHOEVER
LOSES...

...MUST
NEVER
PICK UP
A PEN
AGAIN.



ALL I
COULD
THINK
WAS,

"WHY DID
THIS WIN
FIRST
PRIZE?"

Amateur Division
First Prize

Well, See You.

Natsuo Fujii

I READ
YOUR PIECE
THAT WON
SHINKO-
SHA'S
LITERARY
AWARD...

...IN THE
PUBLISHED
EDITION
OF THE
MAGAZINE.



...

I JUST
COULDN'T
ACCEPT IT.



BY
COMPETING
WITH YOU,
SEMPAI,

I TRIED
TO ASCERTAIN
IF YOUR SKILL
WAS AUTHENTIC
BY READING
THE CLUB
ANTHOLOGY,
BUT YOUR PAST
WORK WAS
SUBSTANDARD
AT BEST.

I COULD
ONLY ASSUME
THERE'D
BEEN SOME
KIND OF
MISTAKE.

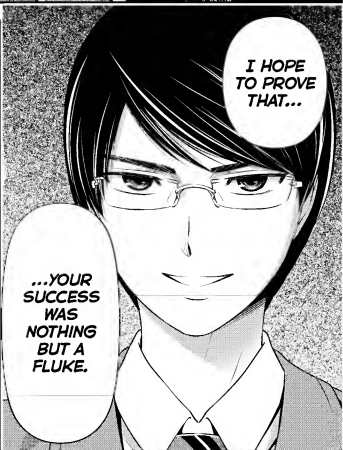
SINCE YOU
HADN'T WON
ANY AWARDS
PRIOR,



WHAT'S
GOING ON
HERE?

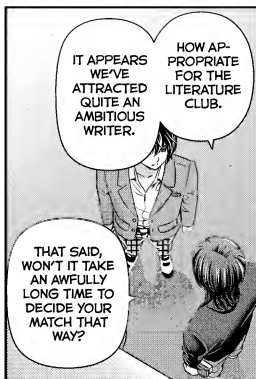


...



...YOUR
SUCCESS
WAS
NOTHING
BUT A
FLUKE.

I HOPE
TO PROVE
THAT...





YOU'LL
BOTH WRITE
THE SAME
GENRE,
FORMAT, AND
LENGTH.

RATHER
THAN SUBMIT
FOR AN AWARD,
WE'LL HAVE THE
LITERATURE
CLUB MEMBERS
READ BOTH
PIECES AND
DECIDE WHICH
IS SUPERIOR.

WHAT
SAY
WE DO
THIS?

IN ORDER
TO PREVENT
BIAS, NAMES
WILL BE KEPT
ANONYMOUS.



SOUND
GOOD?

THIS WAY, YOU
WON'T HAVE TO
WORRY ABOUT
AMBIGUITY OVER
WHO WINS OR
LOSES IN THE
EVENT YOU BOTH
RECEIVE THE
SAME AWARD.

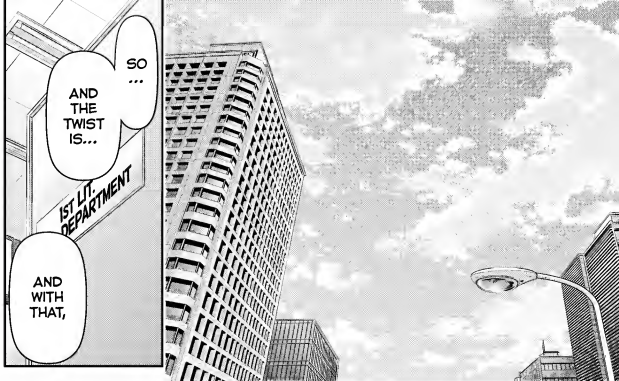


WHILE
THEY AREN'T
PROFESSIONAL
JUDGES, OUR
MEMBERS
ARE ALL AVID
READERS
AND YOUR
SO-CALLED
"TARGET
AUDIENCE."



WELL
...

AS LONG
AS THE
CONTEST
IS FAIR...



AND
THE
TWIST
IS...

SO
...

AND
WITH
THAT,



SERI-
OUSLY
?

がく SLUMP

ALL
REJECT-
ED! ♥



WHAT'S
UP?
TESTS?

OH, RIGHT.
ABOUT
OUR NEXT
MEETING.

IS IT OKAY
IF WE
POSTPONE
IT A LITTLE?



TRY TO
WRITE WITH
THAT IN MIND
NEXT TIME.

YOUR
WORK IS
CONSISTENT
OVERALL,
BUT IT
DOESN'T
REALLY
HAVE A
SELLING
POINT.

OKAY
...

MY FIFTH
FAILED
SUB-
MISSION!



SOUNDS FUN!

OOH!

A LITERARY SHOWDOWN, HUH?!

BLAH
BLAH
YADDA
YADDA

NO.

SOME-
THING
JUST
CAME UP
WITH MY
CLUB...



OH, LET
ME READ
THAT PIECE
WHEN YOU
FINISH IT,
OKAY?

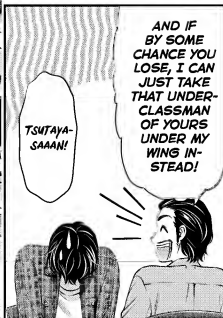
THAT MUCH
PRESSURE
IS JUST WHAT
YOU NEED
TO WRITE
BETTER!
PROBABLY,
ANYWAY.

I'LL HAVE TO
GIVE UP ON
WRITING IF I
LOSE, Y'KNOW.

IT'S
REALLY
NOT...

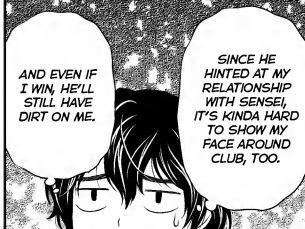


THIS
SUCKS
...



TSUTAYA-
SAAA!

AND IF
BY SOME
CHANCE YOU
LOSE, I CAN
JUST TAKE
THAT UNDER-
CLASSMAN
OF YOURS
UNDER MY
WING IN-
STEAD!







HON-
ESTLY,

AND I
THINK
YOU
SHOULD.

I THINK
YOU'D
BE ABLE
TO JUST
IGNORE
THAT
PROMISE,
SEMPAI.

BUT THE
LOSER HAS
TO PUT THEIR
PEN DOWN
FOR GOOD,
RIGHT?

YOU
DIDN'T
TELL THE
REST OF
US,



SO...

AS THE ONE
WHO SUGGEST-
ED IT, HIS PRIDE
WILL PROBABLY
KEEP HIM FROM
WRITING EVER
AGAIN.

BUT I
DOUBT
SHIBASAKI-
KUN WILL
...



I WON'T
FORCE YOU
TO TALK IF
YOU DON'T
WANT TO.

...



...CLASS-
MATES WITH
SHIBASAKI-
KUN IN
GRADE
SCHOOL.

I
WAS
...



YOU
SAY THAT,
KABASAWA-
SAN?

WHAT
MAKES
...



UPON ENTERING MIDDLE SCHOOL, HE ENROLLED IN A PRESTIGIOUS PRIVATE SCHOOL.

EVEN MY PARENTS TOLD ME I SHOULD, "AIM TO BE AS SMART AS SUBARU-KUN."

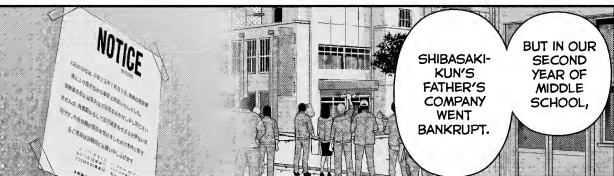


HE WAS POPULAR WITH EVERYONE.

PEOPLE EXPECTED HIM TO BECOME A FAMOUS AUTHOR OR CEO SOMEDAY.

WAS A SMART, CHEERFUL BOY FROM A WELL-OFF FAMILY, AND A GOOD WRITER, TOO.

SHIBASAKI-KUN ...



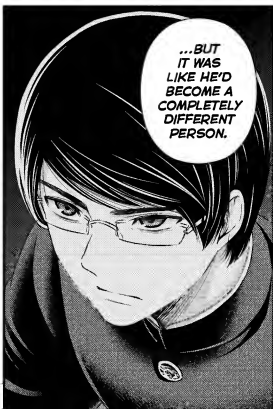
SHIBASAKI-KUN'S FATHER'S COMPANY WENT BANKRUPT.

BUT IN OUR SECOND YEAR OF MIDDLE SCHOOL,



IT SEEMED PEOPLE HAD TURNED ON HIM PRETTY BADLY AT HIS OLD SCHOOL.

HE KEPT UP HIS HOBBY OF WRITING, BUT...



...BUT IT WAS LIKE HE'D BECOME A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT PERSON.



SHIBASAKI-KUN TRANSFERRED TO THE SAME MIDDLE SCHOOL AS ME IN OUR THIRD YEAR.

DUE TO THE HIGH TUITION AT HIS PRIVATE SCHOOL,

ALL OUR OLD CLASSMATES WERE LOOKING FORWARD TO SEEING HIM AGAIN...



HE SUBMITTED FOR AWARD AFTER AWARD AS IF CONSUMED BY VEN-GEANCE.

INCLUDING THE AWARD YOU WON, SEMPAL...

Shinkosha
Literary Award



I'LL SHOW ALL THOSE PEOPLE WHO TREATED ME LIKE A FOOL!

I REFUSE TO END UP LIKE MY DAD!



IT'S THE ONE THING KEEPING HIM TOGETHER.

THAT'S HOW STRONG HIS OBSESSION WITH NOVELS IS.

HE JUST COULDN'T ACCEPT THAT HIS EFFORTS WEREN'T REWARDED.

HE MUST HAVE BEEN SO FRUSTRATED TO PICK A FIGHT WITH YOU LIKE THIS.



THEN HE WON'T HAVE ANYTHING LEFT!



IF YOU TAKE AWAY WRITING FROM HIM, TOO,





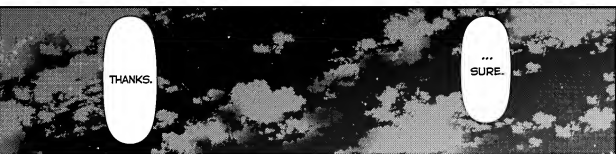


IF THINGS
GET OVER-
WHELMING,

I'LL BE
THERE TO
HELP.



DON'T TRY TO
SHOULDER
EVERYTHING
BY YOURSELF,
OKAY?



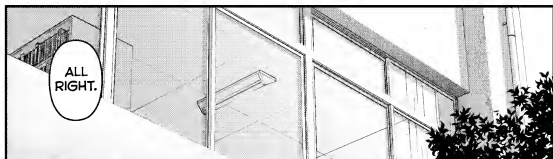
THANKS.

...
SURE.



THE
DAY
OF THE
VOTE







NEEDLESS
TO SAY,
NAMES HAVE
BEEN KEPT
ANONYMOUS,
SO THEY DO
NOT KNOW
WHO WROTE
WHICH PIECE.

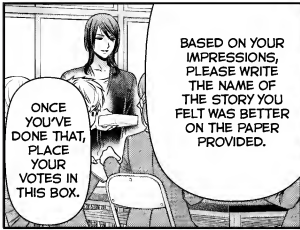
WERE GIVEN
COPIES OF
THE WORKS
SUBMITTED
BY OUR TWO
CONTESTANTS
THIS MORNING
TO BE READ
DURING BREAKS
BETWEEN
CLASSES.

THE CLUB
MEMBERS,
ALL OF WHOM
HAVE AGREED
TO ACT AS
JUDGES,



...WILL BE
BASED
PURELY ON
THE CONTENT
OF THE
STORIES.

THE
JUDGING
...



ONCE
YOU'VE
DONE THAT,
PLACE
YOUR
VOTES IN
THIS BOX.

BASED ON YOUR
IMPRESSIONS,
PLEASE WRITE
THE NAME OF
THE STORY YOU
FELT WAS BETTER
ON THE PAPER
PROVIDED.



**THEY
WERE
NEAT!**

THE
GENRE
WAS
SCI-FI,

AND THE
RULES
CALLED
FOR SHORT
STORIES
NO LONGER
THAN 5,000
WORDS.



I FELT
LIKE I WAS
TRANSPORTED
TO THE
FUTURE.



"The Rules
of Interstellar
Warfare"
Subaru Shibasaki

"The Visitor
Next Door"
Natsuo Fujii

THESE
ARE...

...THE
AUTHORS
OF THEIR
RESPECTIVE
WORKS.

tor
or
SQUEAK
WHITEBOARD
SQUEAK





BUT OF COURSE.



SQUEAK

"The Rules of Interstellar Warfare"
Subaru Shibasaki

THE RULES OF INTER-
STELLAR WARFARE,

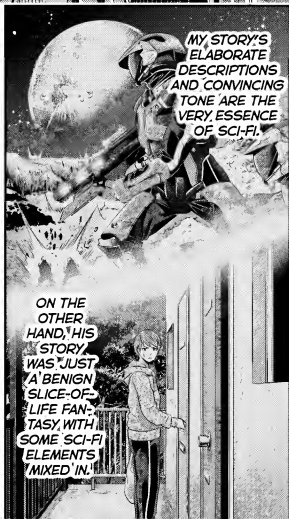
SHIBA-
SAKI-
KUN.

おほおほ



I'LL
SHOW
YOU...

...JUST
HOW MUCH
OF A GAP
THERE IS
BETWEEN
OUR
SKILLS!



MY STORY'S
ELABORATE
DESCRIPTIONS
AND CONVINCING
TONE ARE THE
VERY ESSENCE
OF SCI-FI.

ON THE
OTHER
HAND, HIS
STORY
WAS JUST
A BENIGN
SLICE-OF-
LIFE FAN-
TASY, WITH
SOME SCI-FI
ELEMENTS
MIXED IN.

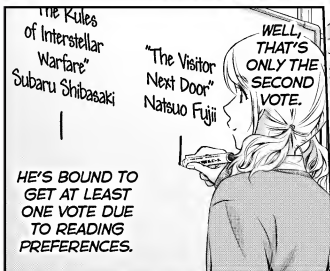


The Visitor
Next Door
Natsuo Fujii

THE
VISITOR
NEXT
DOOR,



TCH



The Rules
of Interstellar
Warfare
Subaru Shibusaki

"The Visitor
Next Door"
Natsuo Fujii

WELL,
THAT'S
ONLY THE
SECOND
VOTE.

HE'S BOUND TO
GET AT LEAST
ONE VOTE DUE
TO READING
PREFERENCES.



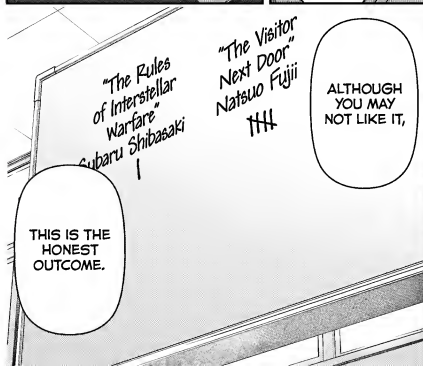
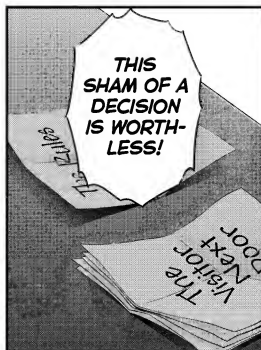
THE
VISITOR
NEXT
DOOR,

NATSUO
FUJII.

FROM HERE ON
OUT, HE WON'T
BE ABLE TO
TOUCH ME.

NATSUO
FUJII.







IT ALL
COMES
DOWN TO
FLESHING
OUT YOUR
CHARAC-
TERS.

THOUGH
YOU
CALLED
IT A
SHAM,

I CAN'T
HELP BUT
AGREE
WITH THE
RESULTS.

THERE
WERE NO
MESSAGES
HIDDEN IN
THE MAN-
USCRIPTS,
NOR ANY
TAMPERING
WITH THE
VOTES.

THE
CONTEST
WAS HELD
FAIR AND
SQUARE.

WERE I
ALSO A CLUB
MEMBER, I
WOULD HAVE
VOTED FOR
FUJII-KUN,
AS WELL.

STORIES
ARE WRITTEN
AND READ
BY PEOPLE.

HOWEVER,
BECAUSE YOU
WERE SO
FOCUSED ON
THE SETTING,
YOUR DEPICTION
OF THE CHARAC-
TERS ENDED
UP FEELING
SHALLOW.

YOUR STORY'S
MINUTE DETAILS
AND ELABORATE
WORLD WERE
IMPRESSIVE.

WHAT
DO YOU
KNOW
ABOUT
LITERA-
TURE?!

HAH!

BIG TALK,
COMING
FROM A
LOWLY
JAPANESE
TEACHER.

IN THAT
REGARD,
WHILE THE
SCALE OF
FUJII-KUN'S
STORY WAS
SMALL, HIS
CHARACTERI-
ZATION WAS
ON POINT.





OH.

YEAH.

"The Rules
Interestingly
Barfare"
ru Shiba
I

Visitor
door"
Fujii

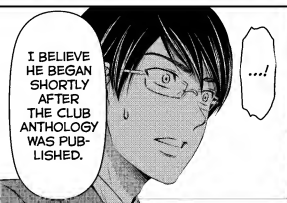
FUJII-KUN,
DID YOU
BRING WHAT
I ASKED
YOU TO?



♪
FUMP

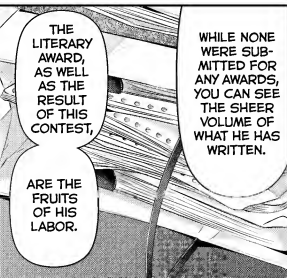


THEY WEIGH
A TON, SO
I'VE BEEN
BRINGING
THEM IN
BATCHES
THE PAST
FEW DAYS.



I BELIEVE
HE BEGAN
SHORTLY
AFTER
THE CLUB
ANTHOLOGY
WAS PUB-
LISHED.

...!



THE
LITERARY
AWARD,
AS WELL
AS THE
RESULT
OF THIS
CONTEST,

ARE THE
FRUITS
OF HIS
LABOR.

WHILE NONE
WERE SUB-
MITTED FOR
ANY AWARDS,
YOU CAN SEE
THE SHEER
VOLUME OF
WHAT HE HAS
WRITTEN.



THESE
ARE ALL THE
SHORT STORIES
FUJII-KUN HAS
BEEN WRITING
SINCE FALL OF
LAST YEAR.



OH,
YEAH.

ABOUT
THE
CONDITION
THE
LOSER
HAS TO
FOLLOW
...

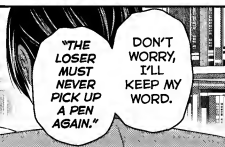


ARE YOU
PRAISING
ME OR
INSULTING
ME? MAKE
UP YOUR
MIND...

WELL,
WITHOUT MY
GUIDANCE,
HE'D LIKELY
STILL BE
A NAIVE BOY
CLINGING TO
SICKENINGLY
SWEET
FANTASIES.

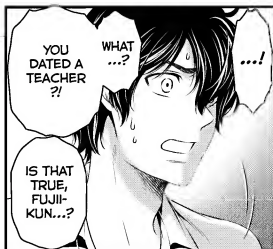


YOU WILLINGLY
ACCEPTED THIS
MATCH IN ORDER
TO PROTECT
YOUR SECRET,
AFTER ALL.



"THE
LOSER
MUST
NEVER
PICK UP
A PEN
AGAIN."

DON'T
WORRY,
I'LL
KEEP MY
WORD.



YOU
DATED A
TEACHER
?!

WHAT
...?

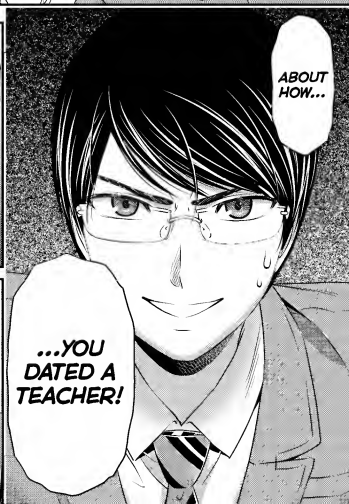
...!

IS THAT
TRUE,
FUJII-
KUN...?



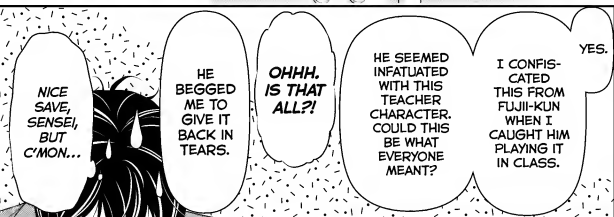
I ASSUME
YOU'RE
REFERRING
TO WHAT
EVERYONE
WAS GOSSIP-
ING ABOUT
BEFORE?

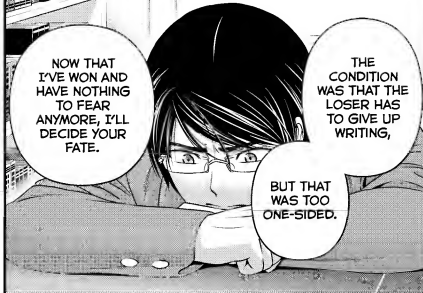
AHH
...



ABOUT
HOW...

...YOU
DATED A
TEACHER!





NOW THAT
I'VE WON AND
HAVE NOTHING
TO FEAR
ANYMORE, I'LL
DECIDE YOUR
FATE.

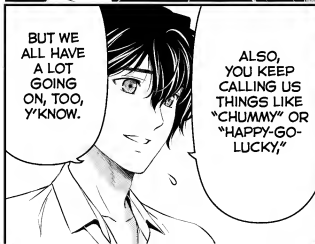
THE
CONDITION
WAS THAT THE
LOSER HAS
TO GIVE UP
WRITING,

BUT THAT
WAS TOO
ONE-SIDED.



...IS TO
JOIN THE
LITERATURE
CLUB.

YOUR
PUNISH-
MENT...



BUT WE
ALL HAVE
A LOT
GOING
ON, TOO,
Y'KNOW.

ALSO,
YOU KEEP
CALLING US
THINGS LIKE
"CHUMMY" OR
"HAPPY-GO-
LUCKY,"



I'M SURE
IT'LL SPICE
THINGS UP
AROUND
HERE IF A
SKILLED
WRITER LIKE
YOU JOINS.

HUH
?



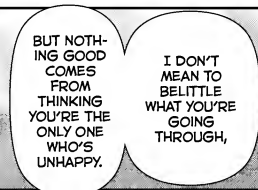
OR FRUSTRATION
FROM NEVER
HAVING YOUR
HARD WORK
REWARDED.



REGRET
FROM
FAILED
LOVE
ENDEAVORS,



WHETHER
IT'S LONELINESS
FROM
LIVING IN
AN EMPTY HOME,



BUT NOTHING
GOOD
COMES
FROM
THINKING
YOU'RE THE
ONLY ONE
WHO'S
UNHAPPY.

I DON'T
MEAN TO
BELITTLE
WHAT YOU'RE
GOING
THROUGH,



BUT
EVERYONE
HAS
PROBLEMS.

WE
MIGHT
SEEM
CARE-FREE,

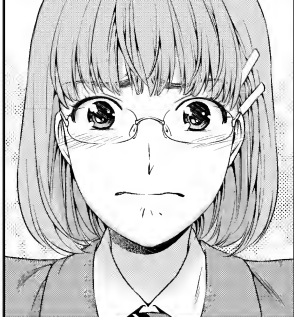


...



IF YOU
SPEND
MORE
TIME WITH
PEOPLE
INSTEAD OF
ISOLATING
YOURSELF,

I THINK
YOU'LL BE
ABLE TO
WRITE EVEN
BETTER
STORIES,
TOO.





BY THE WAY, SENSEI.

DID YOU ...

WHO'D HAVE THOUGHT SOMETHING I CONFISCATED FROM ANOTHER STUDENT WOULD COME IN HANDY LIKE THIS?

NO PROBLEM.

THANKS FOR THE HELP.

IT'S ACTUALLY PRETTY FUN.

YOU PLAYED IT?

...KNOW ABOUT US?

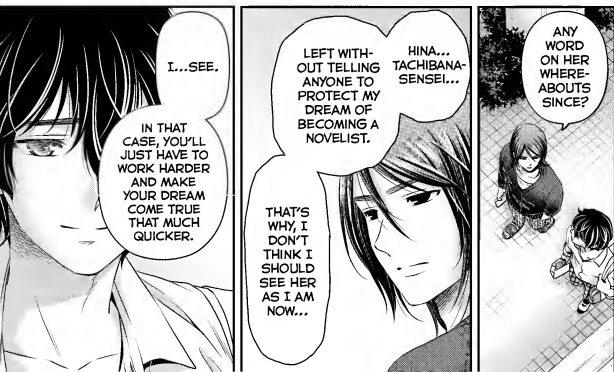


SO I THOUGHT I'D COME UP WITH SOME SORT OF COUNTER-MEASURE.

TRUTH BE TOLD, I OVERHEARD YOU AND SHIBASAKI-KUN ARGUING THAT DAY,

I WAS CONCERNED HOW YOU'D FARE FOLLOWING TACHIBANA-SENSEI'S TRANSFER.

MORE OR LESS.



I...SEE.

IN THAT CASE, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WORK HARDER AND MAKE YOUR DREAM COME TRUE THAT MUCH QUICKER.

LEFT WITH-OUT TELLING ANYONE TO PROTECT MY DREAM OF BECOMING A NOVELIST.

HINA... TACHIBANA-SENSEI...

THAT'S WHY, I DON'T THINK I SHOULD SEE HER AS I AM NOW...

ANY WORD ON HER WHERE-ABOUTS SINCE?



TAKE CARE.

BYE.

BYE,
SENSEI!



YES.



HER HAIR.

WHAT DOES
?

IT ALMOST
FEELS LIKE
A WASTE,
HUH?



I LIKE IT.
I THINK
IT'S A RE-
FRESHING
LOOK FOR
HER.

YEAH
?

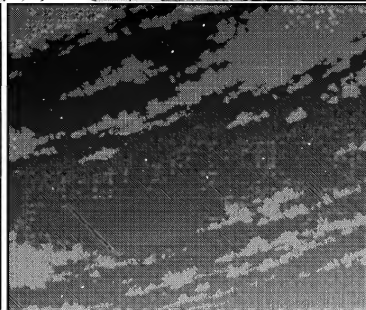
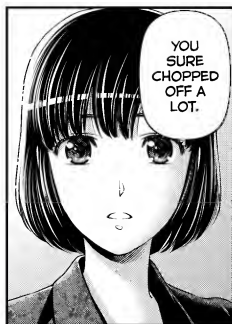
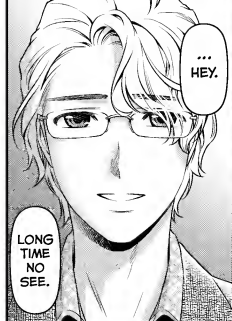


CHAPTER 77: REUNION



HAVE A
GOOD
NIGHT.

YOU, TOO.
I'M TAKING
OFF.





NO...
I'M THE
ONE WHO
SHOWED
UP OUT OF
THE BLUE.



BUT THE
SASHIMI
IS REALLY
GOOD.

EVERY-
WHERE
FOR
YOU.

I
LOOKED
...



I FRANTICALLY CALLED AROUND TO EVERY SCHOOL IN THE CITY,

SINCE I KNEW YOU WERE PROBABLY ALL ALONE.

CONSIDERING THE WEIRD TIMING AND THE FACT THAT NOBODY WAS TOLD WHERE YOU WENT, I FIGURED SOMETHING HAD TO HAVE HAPPENED.

KIRIYA-SEMPAI TOLD ME YOU WERE TRANSFERRED RIGHT BEFORE WINTER BREAK.



YES.

IT'S EXACTLY AS YOU THINK.

...



DOES IT HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIM?

WITH NATSUO-KUN?

WHAT HAPPENED?



FRANKLY, I WAS PREPARED TO BE FIRED.

THIS TRANSFER IS MY PUNISHMENT.

THE CONDITIONS FOR KEEPING OUR RELATIONSHIP CONFIDENTIAL WERE BREAKING IT OFF AND ACCEPTING A RELOCATION.



MY IMMATURETY GOT THE BETTER OF ME...

...AND I ENDED UP GETTING HIM INVOLVED.



...IT'S
OKAY.

YOU
DON'T
...

HAVE TO
FORCE
YOURSELF
TO SMILE.



I'M
ACTUALLY
DOING WELL,
ALL THINGS
CONSIDERED.

NO NEED
TO WORRY
ABOUT ME.

WHAT,
DID YOU
THINK I
DIED?

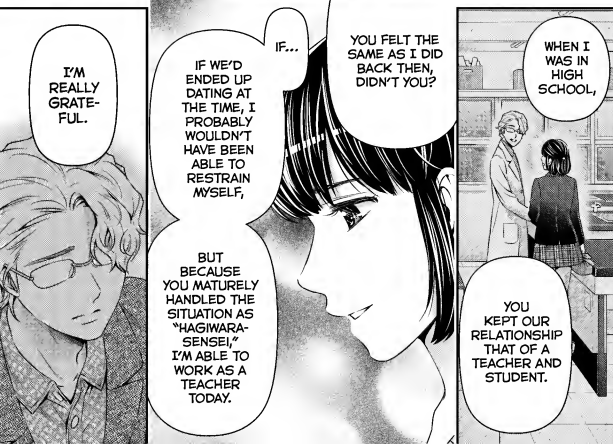
AND I
CHANGED
MY
NUMBER,
SO NO
ONE CAN
REACH
ME.



I NEED
TO THANK
YOU.

SHUU-
SAN.

...



I'M
REALLY
GRATEFUL.

IF...

IF WE'D
ENDED UP
DATING AT
THE TIME, I
PROBABLY
WOULDN'T
HAVE BEEN
ABLE TO
RESTRAIN
MYSELF,

YOU FELT THE
SAME AS I DID
BACK THEN,
DIDN'T YOU?

BUT
BECAUSE
YOU MATURELY
HANDLED THE
SITUATION AS
"HAGIWARA-
SENSEI,"
I'M ABLE TO
WORK AS A
TEACHER
TODAY.

WHEN I
WAS IN
HIGH
SCHOOL,

YOU
KEPT OUR
RELATIONSHIP
THAT OF A
TEACHER AND
STUDENT.



IT'S
GOTTEN
PRETTY
LATE.

WILL YOU
BE OKAY
GETTING
BACK?



YEAH. I
BOOKED A
ROOM AT
AN INN UP
AHEAD.

I'LL
GO HOME
IN THE
MORNING.

I
SEE.



TAKE
CARE,

SHUU-
SAN.



WELL,
GOOD
NIGHT.

I'M
SORRY
FOR
WORRYING
YOU,

BUT I'M
FINE,
REALLY.







I WANT
TO HELP
YOU IN
ANY WAY
I CAN!

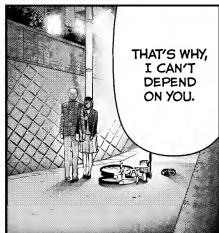
IT'S
OKAY TO
RELY ON
OTHERS
WHEN
THINGS
GET
ROUGH!

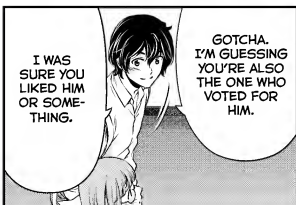
WHY
DO YOU
ALWAYS
TRY TO
BEAR
EVERY-
THING BY
YOUR-
SELF?!



GRIP <||

7
...







WELL,
I CAN'T
VERY WELL
DISOBEY THE
VICTOR'S
ORDERS.

ORDER?



GLAD
I WAS
WRONG.

I THOUGHT
YOU MIGHT
JUST BECOME
A MEMBER
ON PAPER
AND SKIP
MEETINGS.

LOOK
WHO'S
HERE.



I'M NOT
PICKING
ON ANY-
ONE!

ESPE-
CIALLY
YOU,
FUJII-
KUN.

DON'T THINK
IT'S OKAY TO
PICK ON THE
FRESHMAN
AFTER WHAT
HAPPENED.

YES,
SIR!



GLARE



A FULL
HOUSE
AGAIN
TODAY,
I SEE.

EVERYONE
GETTING
ALONG?



CAN
I HAVE
YOUR
AUTO-
GRAPH
?



BESIDES, IT ISN'T
FAIR THAT YOU HAD
YOU HASUKAWA-
SENSEI'S GUIDANCE
ALL ALONG!
I'M DEFINITELY
BETTER IN TERMS
OF RAW TALENT!

WHAT'S
SO
FUNNY
?!



WERE
YOU JUST
NERVOUS
?!

WHAT THE
HELL?!
I THOUGHT
YOU WERE
GONNA
JUMP HIM!

PICK AN
ATTITUDE
AND STICK
WITH IT!



FOR THE
RECORD,
I KEEP
THAT A
SECRET. AT
SCHOOL,

SO MAKE
SURE THIS
DOESN'T
LEAVE THE
CLUBROOM,
ALL RIGHT?



WHAT'S WITH
YOU PEOPLE?!
THIS IS YOU
HASUKAWA IN
THE FLESH,
YOU KNOW!

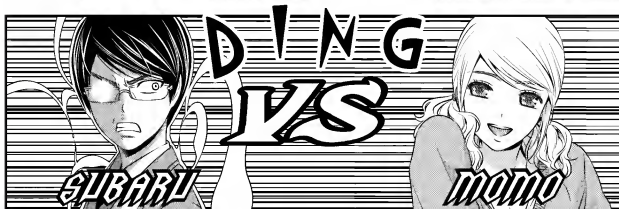




BARU-CHAN.
♥

THEN WHAT ABOUT BARU-CHAN?

I SAID I DON'T WANT A NICKNAME! I SWEAR, WHAT A CRUDE GROUP.



...SO WE CAN GET TO KNOW YOU BETTER, SUBARU-KUN.
♥

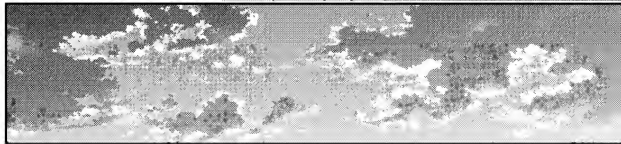
WE JUST WANNA GIVE YOU A NICK-NAME...



AWW ...

DON'T BE LIKE THAT.







CHAPTER 78: WAVERING DETERMINATION











THEN,
THIS
IS
ABOUT
...



THERE ARE
ONLY SO
MANY THINGS
WE HAVE TO
TALK ABOUT.

WELL,

THAT
SAID,



...HINA-
CHAN
THE
OTHER
DAY.

I MET
...



WHO'D
HAVE
THOUGHT
THINGS
WOULD END
UP THIS WAY
BETWEEN
THE TWO
OF YOU?

I WAS
SHOCKED
TO HEAR
SHE'D BEEN
TRANSFERRED
ALL OF A
SUDDEN.

!



THEN AGAIN,
I SUPPOSE I
HAVE DON'T
HAVE TO RE-
ASSURE YOU,

SEEING
AS YOU'VE
ALREADY
BROKEN UP.

...



I ONLY
SEARCHED
HER OUT
BECAUSE
I WAS
CONCERNED.

OH, DON'T
WORRY.
WE'RE NOT
IN TOUCH
OR ANY-
THING.



...HINA
DOING
WELL?

IS
...



AS THINGS
STAND,

HOW DO
YOU FEEL
ABOUT
HINA-CHAN
NOW?



TELL ME,
NATSUO-
KUN.

...

CLINK



...

NOT A SINGLE DAY PASSES WHEN I DON'T THINK ABOUT HER.

AND YET YOU HAVEN'T TRIED LOOKING FOR HER?

MY FEELINGS FOR HER HAVEN'T CHANGED, OF COURSE.



"NOW?"



I...

UM...

AND HOW LONG WILL THAT TAKE?

HOW MANY YEARS?



I'M WORKING HARD TO DEBUT AS A WRITER AS SOON AS—

WELL,

I DID A RECEIVE A PRETTY BIG AWARD.



HINA LEFT IN ORDER TO PROTECT MY DREAM OF BECOMING A NOVELIST.

THAT'S WHY, I CAN'T IMAGINE SHE'D BE HAPPY IF I TRIED TO TRACK HER DOWN AS I AM NOW.

I THINK IF WE MEET AGAIN, IT SHOULD BE AFTER I MAKE MY DREAM COME TRUE.

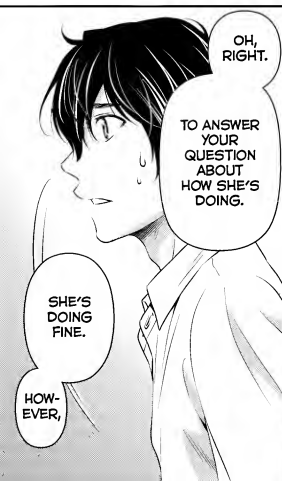


AND
WHAT IF
YOUR
HARD
WORK
NEVER
PAYS
OFF?



...HAVE
TO KEEP
WAITING
FOR YOU
FOREVER?

SHOULD
HINA-
CHAN
REALLY
...



OH,
RIGHT.

TO ANSWER
YOUR
QUESTION
ABOUT
HOW SHE'S
DOING.

SHE'S
DOING
FINE.

HOW-
EVER,



...



I JUST
WANTED TO
HEAR HOW
YOU FELT.

SORRY,
SORRY.

I DON'T
MEAN TO
PUT YOU
ON THE
SPOT.



...SHE'S
ALREADY
OVER
YOU.

IT
SEEMS
THAT
...



SHE'S
SETTLED
DOWN
AND IS
ENJOYING
HER NEW
LIFE.

WELL,
IT SOUNDED
LIKE SHE
WAS TORN
APART IN THE
BEGINNING,

BUT TIME
HEALS ALL
WOUNDS.



SHE HARDLY
EVEN THINKS
ABOUT YOU
THESE DAYS.

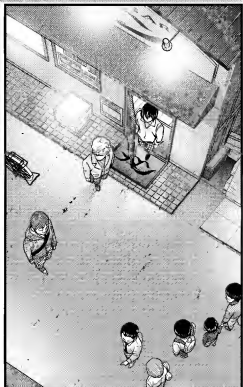
SHE SAID
SHE'S
BEEN
SO BUSY
THAT...

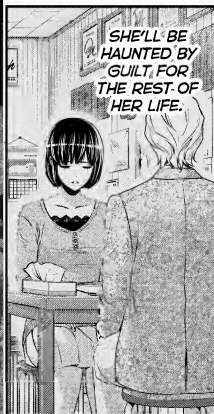
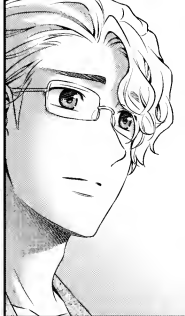
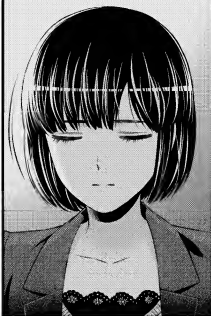


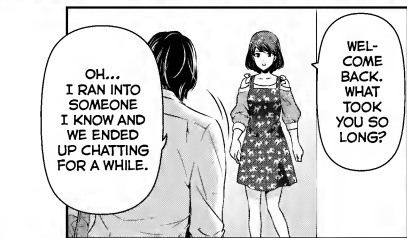
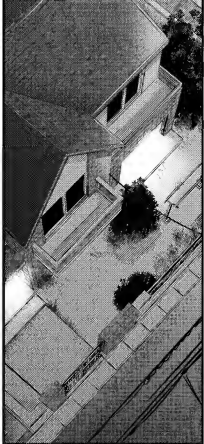
HUH
...?

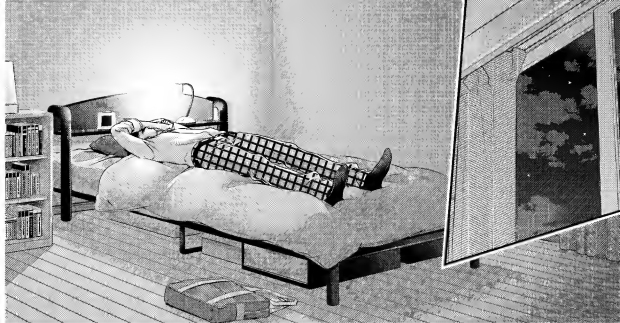
...THAT
RIGHT?

IS...

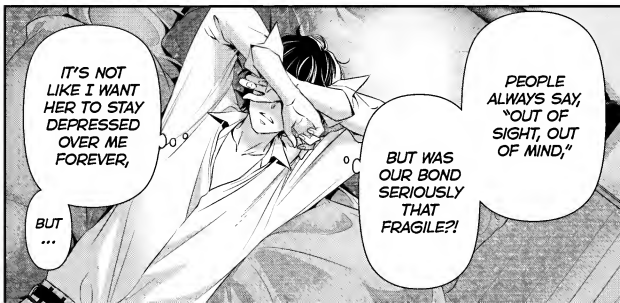








SHE
SAID...



BUT WHAT IF
HINA DOESN'T
FEEL THE
SAME WAY?

WHAT IF SHE
REALLY HAS
MOVED ON?

ALL THIS
TIME, I'VE
BEEN
WORKING
WITH THE
HOPES OF
BEING WITH
HINA AGAIN
SOMEDAY.





WHEN
DID YOU
SNEAK IN
HERE?!



HUH
?!

WHA-

YOU
SCARED
THE SHIT
OUTTA
ME!

SHWIP
はい
?



I TOLD YOU,
I'LL EAT
TOMORROW
...

I'M
NOT
HUNGRY
RIGHT
NOW.



WELL, THE
SWEET AND
SOUR PORK
CAME OUT
REALLY
GOOD.

TRY IT.



YOU
WON'T
FEEL
BETTER
UNLESS
YOU
EAT!

NO
BUTS.

FWUP
!!



YUM
...

EVEN IF YOU
DON'T HAVE
AN APPETITE,
GOING
HUNGRY WILL
ONLY MAKE
YOU FEEL
WORSE.



THIS IS
KINDA
FUN.

I
CARRIED
IT UP
HERE,
ANYWAY.



ALL RIGHT,
ALL RIGHT.
I'LL GO
EAT...

IT'S
FINE.
YOU
CAN LIE
THERE.



YEAH.

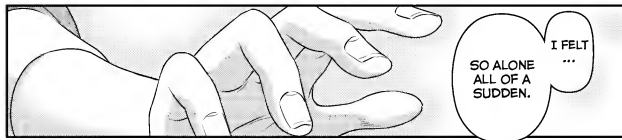
GOOD,
RIGHT?

IT'D BE A
SHAME
NOT TO EAT
IT FRESH,
RIGHT?

YES,
MA'AM.









SURE

...



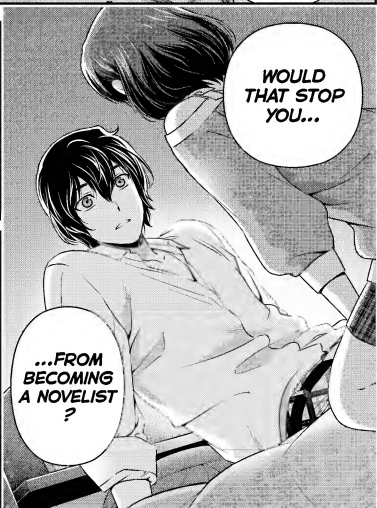
EVEN IF BY
SOME CHANCE
HINA'S REALLY
OVER YOU,

PUTTING ASIDE
WHETHER OR
NOT WHAT HE
WAS TELLING
THE TRUTH,

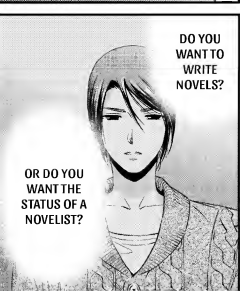


I RATHER
LIKE YOUR
STORIES.

...



WOULD
THAT STOP
YOU...



DO YOU
WANT TO
WRITE
NOVELS?

OR DO YOU
WANT THE
STATUS OF A
NOVELIST?

...FROM
BECOMING
A NOVELIST
?



...TO MAKE
YOU LOSE
YOUR MOTI-
VATION,

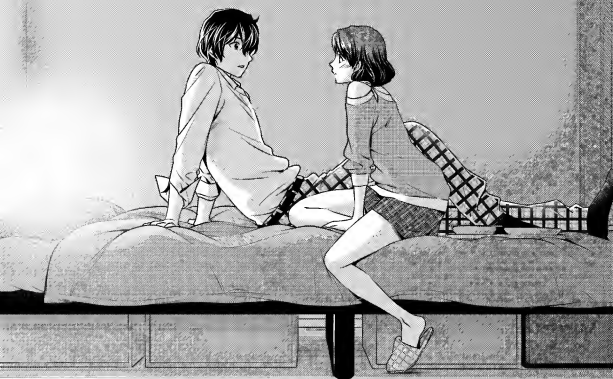
IF THAT'S
ENOUGH...



THEN
FROM
NOW
ON,

YOU CAN
JUST KEEP
WRITING
FOR MY
SAKE.

CHAPTER 79: BUDDING FEELINGS?



...SO WE
CAN BE
TOGETHER?

BY THAT,
DO YOU
MEAN
KEEP
WRITING
...



FOR YOUR
SAKE...?



YE-

YEAH
...



I'M
HOME!



I-
I'M ONE
OF YOUR
READERS,
TOO,
RIGHT?

AND
NOVELISTS
WRITE
FOR AN
AUDIENCE,
RIGHT?

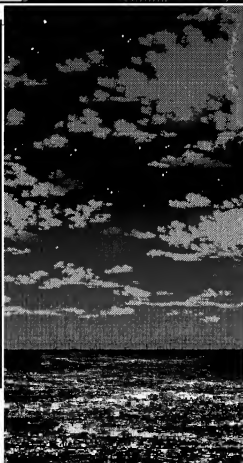
SO, LIKE,
I'M SAYING
YOU SHOULD
FOCUS ON
MORE THAN
JUST MAKING
YOUR OWN
DREAM COME
TRUE. KNOW
WHAT I
MEAN?

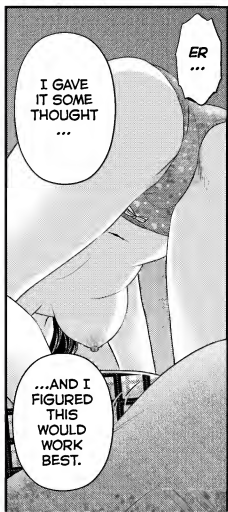


ER...

NO,
WAIT.

I
MEAN
...









MORNING.
WHY'RE
YOU UP SO
EARLY ON A
SATURDAY?

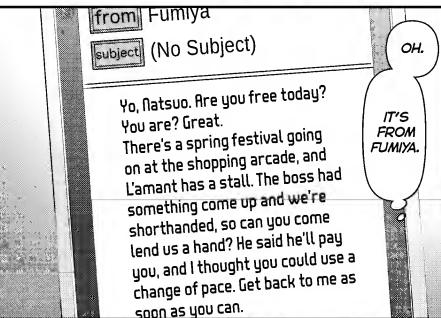


GIMME
A BREAK.
I CAN'T LOOK
HER IN THE
EYE AFTER
A DREAM
LIKE THAT.

AND RIGHT
AFTER I
HEARD
ABOUT HINA,
TOO! HOW
LOW CAN
YOU GET?!



OH,
Y'KNOW
...
I JUST
KINDA
WOKE
UP.





OH!

HEY,
RUI-
CHAN!
YOU
CAME,
TOO?



HUH
...

I USED
TO COME
ALL THE
TIME UNTIL
MIDDLE
SCHOOL.

I DIDN'T
KNOW
ABOUT
THIS
FESTIVAL.



**NAT-
SUO!**

I DIDN'T
KNOW
L'AMANT
WAS
RUNNING
A STALL,
THOUGH.



YOU CAN
CHANGE IN
THE BACK
OF THE
SHOP.

WHERE
DID THE
OWNER
RUN OFF
TO?

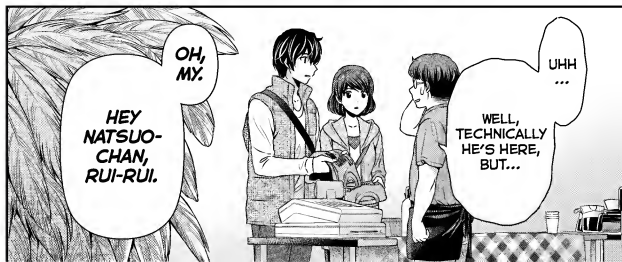
HERE
ARE YOUR
SHIRTS AND
APRONS.



I WAS FREE,
SO I THOUGHT
I'D COME
HELP, TOO.

SUP.

YOU'RE
A LIFE-
SAVER.



OH,
MY.

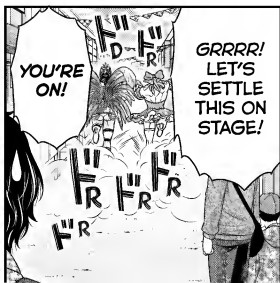
HEY
NATSUO-
CHAN,
RUI-RUI.

UHH
...

WELL,
TECHNICALLY
HE'S HERE,
BUT...









2
SHWIP

HAND
ME THAT
RUBBER
BAND,
WILL YOU?

RUBBER
BAND?

THANKS
FOR WAITING.
HERE ARE
YOUR CARAMEL
LATTES.

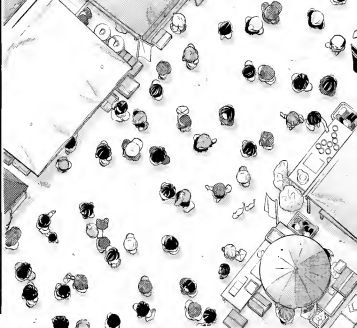
OH.

UH
...

IT'S
NOTH-
ING...

HM?





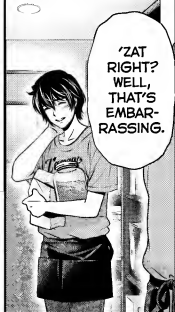


WHEN I
ASKED
HOW SHE
WAS
DOING,

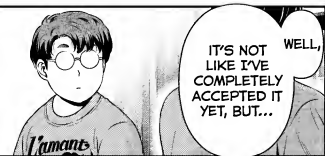
HE SAID
SHE'D
ALREADY
MOVED
ON.

IT'S
JUST,

APPARENTLY,
HAGIWARA-SAN
TRACKED
DOWN HINA.



'ZAT
RIGHT?
WELL,
THAT'S
EMBAR-
RASSING.



IT'S NOT
LIKE I'VE
COMPLETELY
ACCEPTED IT
YET, BUT...

WELL,



Y'KNOW,

SHE
WORRIES
ABOUT YOU
LIKE IT'S
HER OWN
PROBLEM.

RUI-CHAN'S
ALWAYS THE
ONE WHO
PICKS YOU
UP WHEN
YOU FALL.



YOU
BETTER
SHOW HER
SOME
APPRE-
CIATION,
OKAY?

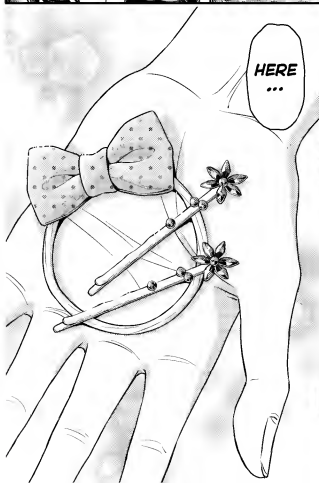


HEARING
THAT MADE
ME FEEL
LIKE SHIT.

I STARTED TO
DOUBT WHY
I'M WORKING
MY ASS OFF
TO BECOME A
NOVELIST.

BUT THEN RUI
TOLD ME TO TRY
WRITING WITH
THE READERS IN
MIND, NOT JUST
FOR MY OWN
DREAM.

SO, I'VE
DECIDED TO
KEEP IT UP
FOR NOW.





SORRY IF
IT'S NOT
REALLY
YOUR
THING...



IT'S
JUST A
LITTLE
SOME-
THING
...

...TO
THANK
YOU FOR
ALWAYS
LOOKING
OUT FOR
ME.



T H A N K S !



Y-YOU
OKAY?

OW,
OW
...

I'LL
TRY IT
ON.





LOOKS
CUTE

...



It...

WHO WOULD
EVER IMAGINE
HE'S NOT
A GIRL?!

MIDDLE
SCHOOL
SECOND-YEAR,
TSUBASA
TANEDAI

AND
THE
WINNER
IS...

OF
COURSE
THEY DO!

DO GIRLS
HAVE A SEX
DRIVE?

DOMEX GIRL

SERI-
OUS
?!

YOU

ARE

JAPANESE
GIRLS HAVE
ALWAYS BEEN
BROUGHT UP
TO BE MODEST.
THEY JUST
DON'T TALK
ABOUT IT.

HE'S
RIGHT!

WHERE'S
YOUR
PROOF?!

WE'VE
BROUGHT THIS
UP COUNTLESS
TIMES SINCE
GRADE SCHOOL,
YET WE NEVER
SEEM TO COME
TO A FIRM
CONCLUSION!

WHO-OA!

IT'S
SAID
BIRTH-
RATES
SKY-
ROCKET
THEN,
TOO.

BY THE
WAY,
THEIR SEX
DRIVE IS
SUPPOS-
EDLY AT
ITS PEAK
DURING
A FULL
MOON.

YOU GUYS...
IF GIRLS HAD
NO SEX DRIVE
WHATSOEVER,
THEN HOW DO
YOU EXPLAIN THE
FEMALE PERVERTS
THAT POP UP IN
THE NEWS NOW
AND THEN?



ISN'T THAT JUST A TESTAMENT TO HOW MUCH HE KNOWS?

AIBA WENT TO THE SAME MIDDLE SCHOOL AS NEGISHI AND CALLED HIM "ERO ZHUGE LIANG."

I'M ALWAYS BLOWN AWAY BY NEGISHI'S WELL OF KNOWLEDGE.

MAN ...

※ *Ero Zhuge Liang: Someone who flaunts their extensive knowledge of sexual matters to other virgins, yet has no first-hand experience of their own.



AREN'T YOU IN THE LITERATURE CLUB?

OH ...

HEY, OSAKA.



...WHO'D EVEN SAY YES TO A BUNCH OF DESPERATE VIRGINS LIKE US.

SHIGH. I WONDER IF THERE'S A GODDESS OUT THERE ...



FROM WHAT HE TELLS ME,



WHAT IS? WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?! HUH?!

SO, LIKE,

MY BROTHER'S A THIRD-YEAR, RIGHT?



ISN'T MOMO KASHIWABARA IN THE SAME CLUB?

YEAH.

HUH?

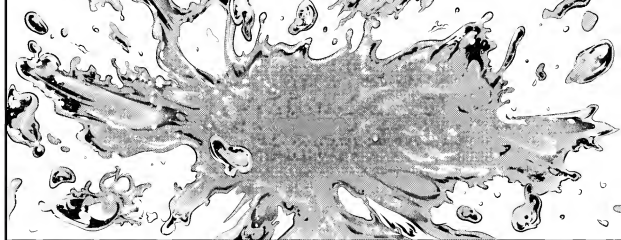
YEAH, SO?

SERIOUSLY? NO, WAY, DUDE! THAT'S AWESOME!



**SHE'LL
SLEEP
WITH ANY-
ONE WHO
ASKS!**

**SHE'S
FAMOUS
AROUND
HERE
FOR IT!**



OOPS.
SORRRYYY.

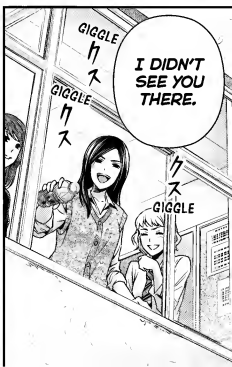


YEAH, WELL,
SHE PISSES
ME OFF.

YOU'RE
SO BAD.

THAT WAS
MEAN,
MIKA.

YOU'RE JUST
MAD BECAUSE
YOU HEARD
SOMEONE SAY
SHE SCREWED
TAKU, AREN'T
YOU?

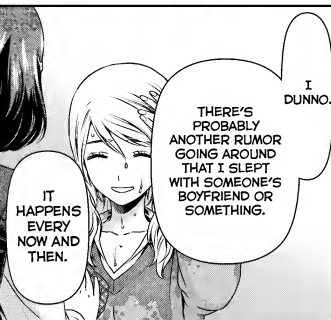
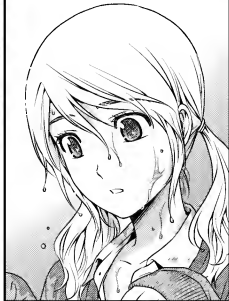


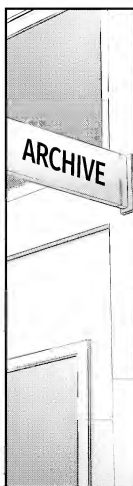
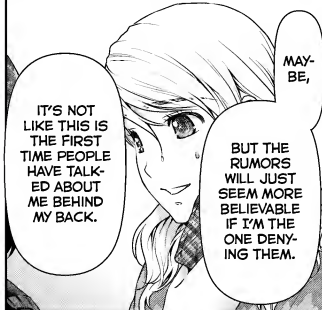
GIGGLE
クス

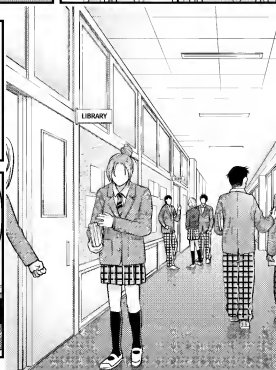
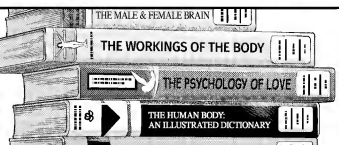
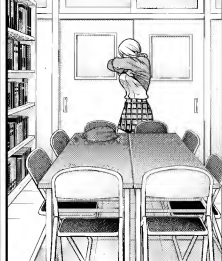
GIGGLE
クス

I DIDN'T
SEE YOU
THERE.

クス
GIGGLE











DO
YOU NEED
SOMETHING
FROM THE
CLUBROOM?

HANG ON.
I'LL BE
DONE IN A
SEC.

I'M
SORRY,
TOO.

MY UNIFORM
GOT DIRTY,
SO I WAS
CHANGING.



I-I'M
REALLY
SORRY!

I DIDN'T
THINK
YOU'D
BE HERE
DURING
LUNCH,
SEMPAI.



✕
≡
≡
RATL



SORRY
ABOUT
THAT.

I BET I
STARTLED
YOU.



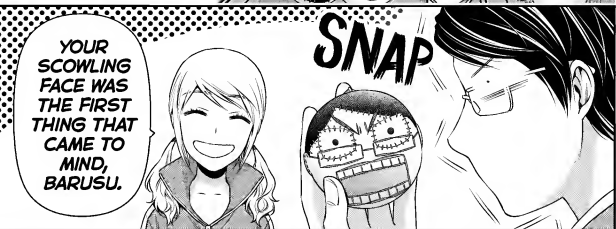
SEE YOU
AFTER
SCHOOL!

THE
ROOM'S
ALL
YOURS!



THANKS
FOR
WAITING.







REAL-
LY?

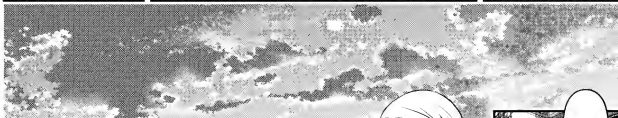
I'M
GLAD!



YES!

IT'S,
UHH,

CUTE.



AH!

YOU
ALREADY
PUT IT
ON YOUR
BAG!

HUH? OH,
Y-YEAH...



ALLIE DIDN'T
COME TODAY,
SO IT LOOKS
LIKE IT'S JUST
US TWO.



BYE-
BYE!

SEE
YA.



ER,

UMM.

MOMO-SEMPAI
...



AHH.
I SEE.

HEE,
HEE.
HOW CUTE.
♥



I HAVEN'T
GOTTEN SOME-
THING LIKE
THIS FROM A
GIRL BEFORE,
SO...

I'M
HAPPY.



UMM. YOU
DROPPED
THEM IN THE
CLUBROOM
DURING
LUNCH!

WAIT,
WHAT?! ARE
THESE MY
PANTIES?!

WHAT'S
THIS?

HE-



AND I
PROMISE
I DIDN'T
SNIFF THEM
OR WEAR
THEM ON
MY HEAD!

D-D-DON'T
WORRY! I
DIDN'T TELL
ANYONE OR
SHOW THEM
AROUND!

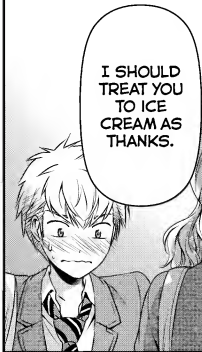


M-MAN,
WHAT THE HELL
AM I
BABBLING
ABOUT?

I JUST
WANTED TO
GIVE THEM
BACK TO
YOU...

I DIDN'T
PICK THEM
UP FOR
ANY DIRTY
REASON
...

HERE
...

A young man with spiky hair, wearing a school uniform, looks nervous with a sweat drop on his forehead.

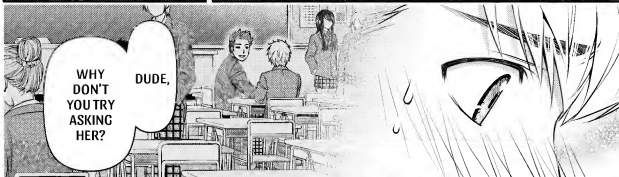
I SHOULD
TREAT YOU
TO ICE
CREAM AS
THANKS.

A close-up of a girl with long, light-colored hair and a gentle smile.

THANKS.♥

A close-up of the girl's face, smiling warmly.

YOU'RE
SO NICE,
RIKKUN.

A wide shot of a classroom. A teacher is at the front, and students are at their desks. Rikkun is in the foreground, looking towards the teacher.

WHY
DON'T
YOU TRY
ASKING
HER?

DUDE,

A man with dark hair and a confident smile, wearing a school uniform.

ERO

GIRLS
WANNA
BANG,
TOO.

YOU
HEARD
NEGISHI.

ZHUGE
LIANG

YOU
MIGHT HAVE
A SHOT IF
YOU TIME IT
RIGHT!

Rikkun is shown from the chest up, looking surprised with his mouth open.

YOU
SOUND
LIKE A
CHICK.

REALITY
CHECK,
THAT KINDA
LOVEY-DOVEY
STUFF ONLY
HAPPENS
IN LIGHT
NOVELS.

W-WELL,
I WANT
MY FIRST
TIME...

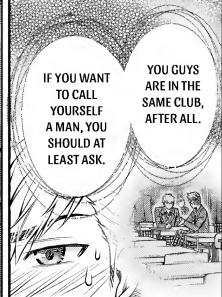
TO BE
WITH
SOMEONE
I LOVE.

Zhuge Liang is shown from the chest up, looking serious.

HUH?! ARE
YOU NUTS?
SHE'S OUR
SENIOR!

C'MON,
WHAT DO
YOU HAVE
TO LOSE?

YOU CAN
JUST PLAY
IT OFF AS A
JOKE IF SHE
SAYS NO.











CHAPTER 81: MOMO AND RITSU (PART TWO)



OHH, SHIT. I HONESTLY DIDN'T THINK THIS FAR AHEAD.





HERE!
IT'S THE ICE
CREAM I
PROMISED
FOR PICK-
ING UP MY
PANTIES.

NO
PROBLEM.

MY HAIR WAS
ALL STIFF, SO
I WAS DYING
TO WASH IT.

SORRY
FOR THE
WAIT!

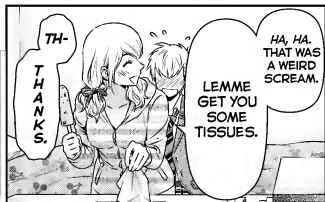


I REMEM-
BERED I
HAD SOME
IN THE
FREEZER.

THIS ICE
CREAM
IS SOOO
GOOD!



HM
...



HOW'D YOU
LIKE THE
SAKURA
CHOCOLATE
CHIP?

Y-YEAH.
IT WAS
GOOD.

I'VE
NEVER
TASTED
THAT
FLAVOR
BEFORE
...

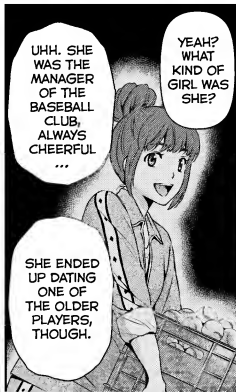
AHH.

ICE CREAM
AFTER A
SHOWER IS
THE BEST!

I STILL
HAVEN'T
ANSWERED
YOUR
QUESTION
...

...ABOUT
WHETHER
OR NOT
THAT
RUMOR
IS TRUE,
HUH?

OH,
YEAH.







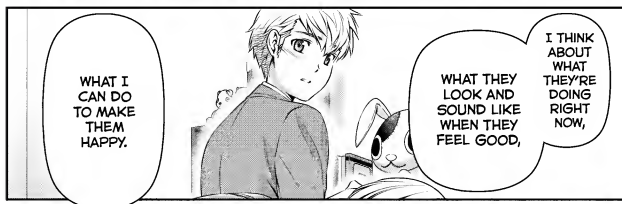


PEOPLE
MIGHT HAVE
ALL SORTS
OF OPINIONS
ABOUT SEX
AND RELA-
TIONSHPIS,

BUT EVERY
GUY I'VE
DATED WAS
SOMEONE
I WAS IN
LOVE WITH
AT THE
TIME.

BUT I ONLY
FEEL THAT WAY
ABOUT PEOPLE
I TRULY LOVE.

THEY
WEREN'T
JUST
"ANYONE."



WHAT I
CAN DO
TO MAKE
THEM
HAPPY.

WHAT THEY
LOOK AND
SOUND LIKE
WHEN THEY
FEEL GOOD,

I THINK
ABOUT
WHAT
THEY'RE
DOING
RIGHT
NOW,



THE PEOPLE
WHO TAKE
THE RUMORS
SERIOUSLY OR
THE PEOPLE
WHO SPREAD
THEM...

...MIGHT DO
SO BECAUSE
THEY'RE
HOLDING OUT
HOPE FOR
SOMETHING,
BUT...



BUT FINDING
OUT THAT WAS
HOW PEOPLE
TALKED ABOUT
ME BEHIND MY
BACK MADE ME
SO UPSET THAT
I BROKE DOWN
AND CRIED.

I SOME-
HOW
MANAGED
TO RUN
AWAY AT
THE TIME,

IT FELT
LIKE
PEOPLE
WERE
DENYING
THE LOVE
I'D FELT
UNTIL
THEN.



I HAD A
PRETTY
DANGEROUS
RUN-IN WITH
A GUY WHO
BELIEVED
THOSE
RUMORS
BEFORE.

C'MON.
YOU'LL DO
IT WITH
ANYONE,
RIGHT?

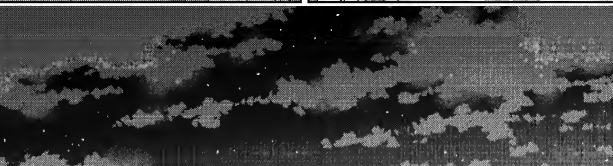
...THAT'S
WHAT HE
SAID.



...THAT
KIND OF
GIRL,
Y'KNOW.



I'M
NOT
...





I...

...HURT
HER.

RIKKUN'S
NOT HERE
TODAY,
EITHER?

HUH?

HUH.

WONDER
IF HE'S
GOT SOME-
THING
PLANNED.

I RAN INTO
HIM ON THE
WAY HERE,

BUT HE
SAID HE
WASN'T
COMING
TODAY.

I WANTED
TO GIVE
BACK THE
MANGA HE
LENT ME.



DON'T
YOU START
CALLING
ME THAT,
TOO! IT'S
IRRITAT-
ING!

BA-

BARU-
SU!

IF YOU
REALLY
WANT TO
QUIT, THEN
I'LL LET
SENSEI
KNOW,

BUT
TAKE
THIS.

ACK!

I TOLD HER
TO JUST
GIVE IT TO YOU
HERSELF,

...!

HUH
?

WHY'RE YOU
GIVING ME
A LETTER?
CREEPY...

I DON'T
WANT
PEOPLE
...

...TO START
GIVING HIM
WEIRD LOOKS
IF I DELIVER IT
IN PERSON.

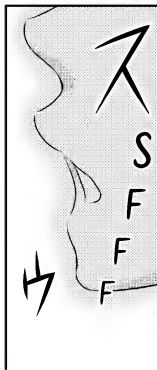
RSTL
+
+
...

BUT SHE
ASKED ME
TO DELIVER
IT BECAUSE
OF SOME
RUMOR GOING
AROUND THE
FIRST-YEARS.

Don't worry about what
happened the other day.
I just miss seeing you
at club, Rikkun.

Momo

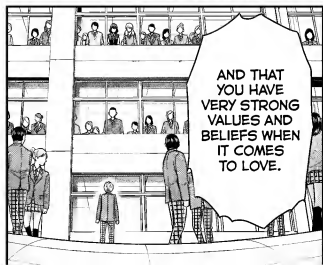
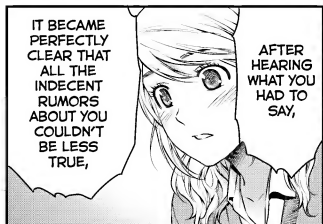
NOT ME!
IT'S FROM
KASHIWA-
BARA-
SEMPAI!

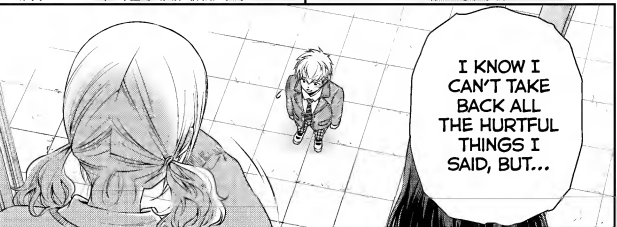




**MOMO-
SEMPAI!**

**ARE YOU
THERE?!**







**COME
BACK TO
CLUB,
OKAY?**

**IT'S
OKAY,
RIKKUN!**



SURE!

WELL...
UMM...

**FIDG
FIDG**

**AL,
YOU'LL
MAKE
HIM RUN
AWAY
AGAIN...**

GUESS
IT'S
POINT-
LESS
TELLING
YOU TO
TAKE A
HINT.

**WHAT
HURTFUL
THINGS DID
YOU SAY?
WHAT RU-
MORS?**

**I HEARD SO,
YOUR
LITTLE
SPEECH
DURING
LUNCH,
BUT...**

**AFTER
SCHOOL**

CHAPTER 82: WHAT'S IMPORTANT



THE PROTAGONIST'S PERSONALITY IS WELL-DEVELOPED, TOO.



THE PACING'S GOOD, AND IT'S EASY TO GET INTO.



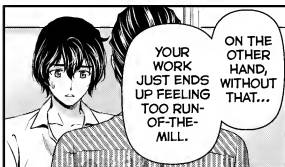
...IT
DOESN'T
COME
CLOSE
TO YOUR
AWARD
PIECE.



...!

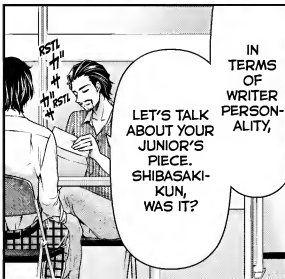
HOWEVER, IT
FEELS LIKE
THOSE SAME
SKILLS ARE
MAKING YOUR
WORK A LITTLE
CONTRIVED
AND TOOTH-
LESS.

YOUR RANGE
OF EXPRESSION
AND TECHNICAL
WRITING SKILLS
ARE DEFINITELY
IMPROVING.



YOUR
WORK
JUST ENDS
UP FEELING
TOO RUN-
OF-THE-
MILL.

ON THE
OTHER
HAND,
WITHOUT
THAT...



LET'S TALK
ABOUT YOUR
JUNIOR'S
PIECE.
SHIBASAKI-
KUN,
WAS IT?

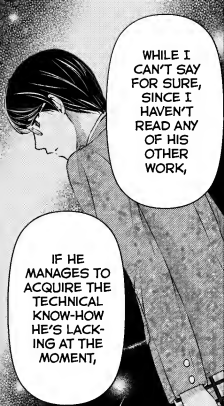
IN
TERMS
OF
WRITER
PERSONALITY,



THE
PAINFULLY
REALISTIC
PHRASING
AND EXPRES-
SION THAT
SHINED IN
YOUR AWARD
PIECE...

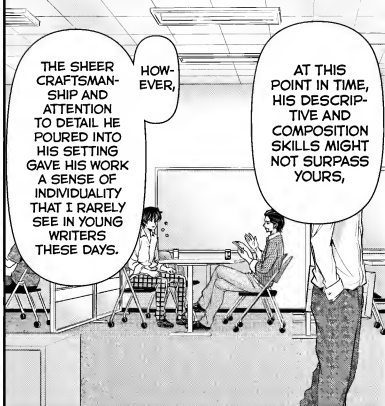
MADE IT
FEEL MORE
LIKE A
REFLECTION
OF YOUR
SOUL.

I THINK
THAT'S
WHERE
YOUR
APPEAL
AS A
WRITER
LIES.



WHILE I
CAN'T SAY
FOR SURE,
SINCE I
HAVEN'T
READ ANY
OF HIS
OTHER
WORK,

IF HE
MANAGES TO
ACQUIRE THE
TECHNICAL
KNOW-HOW
HE'S LACK-
ING AT THE
MOMENT,



THE SHEER
CRAFTSMAN-
SHIP AND
ATTENTION
TO DETAIL HE
POURED INTO
HIS SETTING
GAVE HIS WORK
A SENSE OF
INDIVIDUALITY
THAT I RARELY
SEE IN YOUNG
WRITERS
THESE DAYS.

HOW-
EVER,

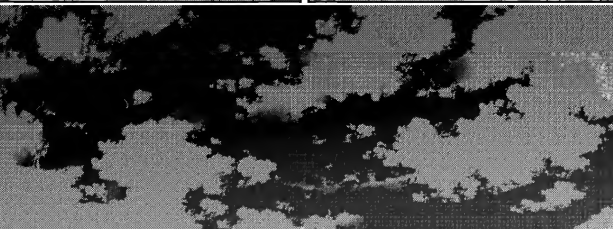
AT THIS
POINT IN TIME,
HIS DESCRIP-
TIVE AND
COMPOSITION
SKILLS MIGHT
NOT SURPASS
YOURS,

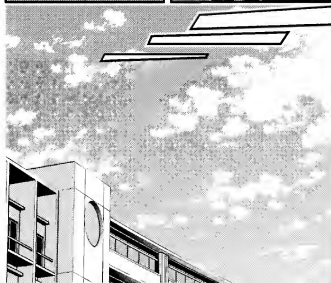
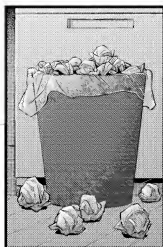


...HE
COULD END
UP GIVING
YOU A RUN
FOR YOUR
MONEY.



THERE'S
A CHANCE
...





DINNER'S
READY,
NATSUO.

HM?

OH...
BE DOWN
IN A SEC.

KNOCK

KNOCK



I
HAVEN'T
SHOWN
HIM
YET...

I SEE.
HONESTLY,
I DON'T
THINK IT'S
UP TO PAR.

THE
PACING IS
PRETTY
FLAT.

WHAT DID
TSUTAYA-
SAN HAVE
TO SAY?

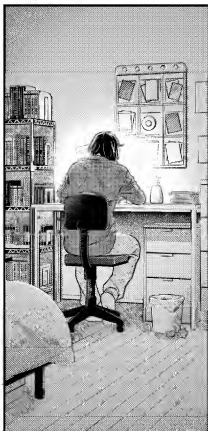


HMM.



FRANKLY,
THE WEEKLY
SHORT
STORIES
YOU DID
WERE
BETTER
WRITTEN.

HAVING READ
FROM START
TO FINISH,
I'M STILL NOT
SURE WHAT
YOU WERE
TRYING TO
EXPRESS WITH
THIS PIECE.



STILL
WORK-
ING?

YEAH.

I FIGURE
I'LL KEEP
AT IT UNTIL I
MAKE SOME
PROGRESS
SINCE TO-
MORROW'S
SATURDAY.

OH...
I'M GOOD.
I'LL JUST
TAKE A
SHOWER
IN THE
MORNING.

THE
BATH'S
FREE.

OKAY.

KNOCK
ノック
ノック
ノック

IN
THAT
CASE,

WHY
DON'T
YOU
TAKE A
BREAK?

MOM
BROUGHT
HOME
SNACKS.







BUT I WAS
ALWAYS
READING IN
ELEMENTARY AND
MIDDLE
SCHOOL.

I DON'T
REMEMBER
WHEN
EXACTLY I
DECIDED TO,

WHAT,
HUH?

I GUESS
WHAT
STARTED
IT...

...WAS MY
MOM'S
DEATH,
MAYBE.

YOU
CAN
HOP IN
IF YOU
WANT.

LOOK,
THERE'S
A BALL
PIT!

YOU LIKE
THOSE,
DON'T YOU,
NATSUO?

EVEN
THOUGH
I VOWED
NOT TO
CRY BACK
THEN,
I'D
START
TEARING
UP OVER
THE
LITTLEST
THINGS.

LOOK,
MOMMY!

LOOK AT ALL
THE YELLOW
ONES I GOT!

MOM-
MY!







I STOPPED DWELLING ON THE FACT THAT SHE WAS GONE AND THAT I WAS LONELY.

WHEN I WAS READING, I WAS COMPLETELY ABSORBED BY THE WORLD INSIDE THE BOOK.

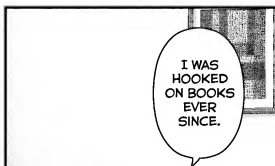
WHEN I HAD MY NOSE IN A BOOK, THOSE THOUGHTS JUST VANISHED.

EVEN THOUGH ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT MOST OF THE TIME WAS HOW MY MOM WAS DEAD,



JUST HOW BOOKS SAVED ME WHEN I WAS LITTLE,

EVENTUALLY, I STARTED DREAMING ABOUT CREATING WORLDS LIKE THE ONES I'D READ.



I WAS HOOKED ON BOOKS EVER SINCE.



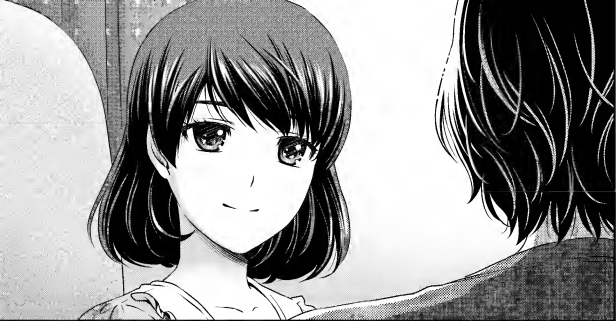
I HOPED THAT...

...I COULD PASS ON THAT JOY TO SOMEONE ELSE SOMEDAY, TOO.



I LOVED HOW THEY COULD SURPRISE ME ONE MOMENT, THEN GRAB ME BY THE HEART ANOTHER.

I WAS SO IMMERSED IN BOOKS THAT I THOUGHT WORDS MIGHT START LEAKING OUT OF MY EARS.







YOUR
OBSERVATION
SKILLS MUST
BE PRETTY
BAD IF YOU
COULDN'T
TELL WHERE
WE WERE
GOING FROM
MY CLOTHES.

WHO'D
EXPECT TO
HIKE UP A
MOUNTAIN
JUST FOR
DESSERT?!

HANG
ON A
SEC...

WHEN YOU
ASKED ME TO
GO WITH YOU,
I FIGURED
YOU MEANT
SOMEWHERE
CLOSE, LIKE
A LOCAL
CAFÉ...



HEY
...



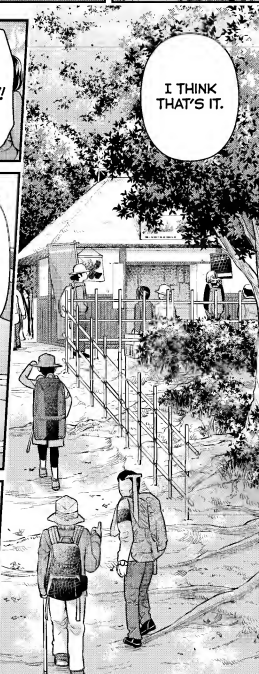
IF I'M
RIGHT,
THEN
SHUT
UP AND
WALK!



PRETTY
SURE ALL
THOSE
PAGES
YOU WERE
WRITING
WERE
GOING
STRAIGHT
INTO THE
TRASH.



MAAAN...
HOW MANY
PAGES
COULD
I HAVE
GOTTEN
DONE BY
NOW?





GLAD WE CAME YET?

NOM
か
か

IT PRACTICALLY VANISHES WHEN IT HITS MY TONGUE!

WHOA! THIS IS GREAT!



I WAS SUPER THIRSTY FROM HIKING, TOO!

YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO GET THIS KINDA FLAVOR BACK IN TOWN!

YEAH!



MMM!

WHAT ARE YOU, A VARIETY SHOW HOST?

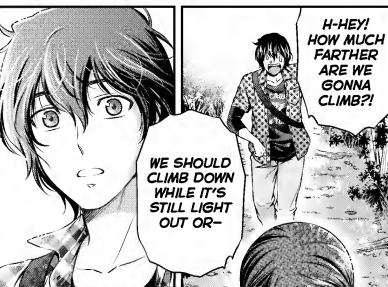


HUH?!

ス
THUD
ス
THUD

NOPE.

WE'RE NOT DONE YET.



WE SHOULD CLIMB DOWN WHILE IT'S STILL LIGHT OUT OR-

H-HEY! HOW MUCH FARTHER ARE WE GONNA CLIMB?!



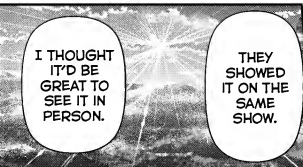
OKAY.

IF WE'RE DONE HERE, WANNA START HEADING BACK?

OUR PARENTS WILL GET WORRIED IF WE'RE OUT TOO LATE.



I WANTED
YOU TO
SEE THIS
VIEW.



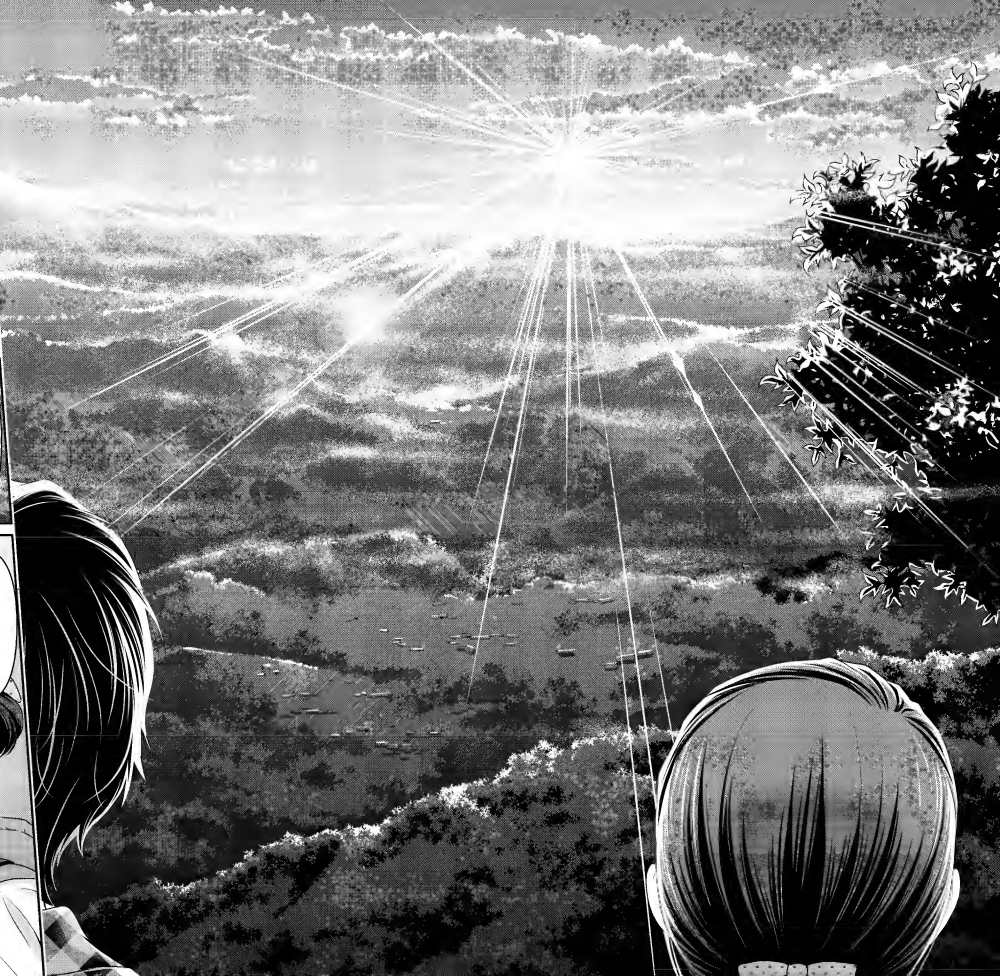
I THOUGHT
IT'D BE
GREAT TO
SEE IT IN
PERSON.

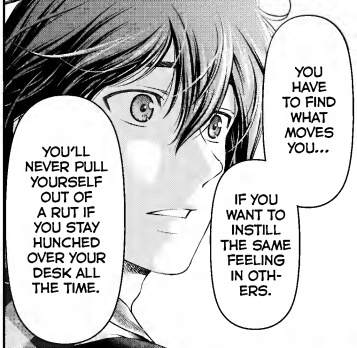
THEY
SHOWED
IT ON THE
SAME
SHOW.



NO MATTER
WHAT KIND OF
CONTENT A
NOVEL HAS,
WHAT'S MOST
IMPORTANT IS
THAT IT MOVES
YOU, RIGHT?

ISN'T THAT
WHAT MADE
YOU FALL IN
LOVE WITH
BOOKS?





YOU'LL
NEVER PULL
YOURSELF
OUT OF
A RUT IF
YOU STAY
HUNCHED
OVER YOUR
DESK ALL
THE TIME.

YOU
HAVE
TO FIND
WHAT
MOVES
YOU...

IF YOU
WANT TO
INSTILL
THE SAME
FEELING
IN OTH-
ERS.



RUI-CHAN'S
ALWAYS THE
ONE WHO PICKS
YOU UP WHEN
YOU FALL.

Y'KNOW,



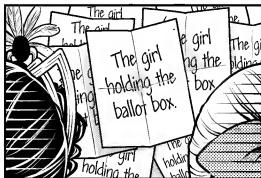
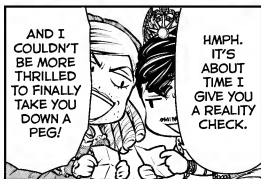
YEAH...

**SHE
REALLY
IS.**



CHAPTER 83: UNCOVERED FEELINGS

DOMEGIRL 4-PANEL THEATER



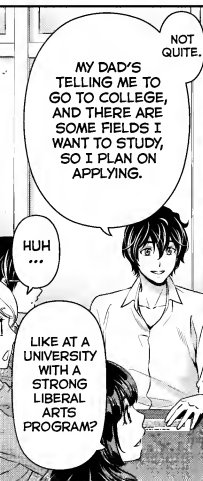


...REALLY DRIVES HOME THE FACT THAT WE'LL BE TAKING ENTRANCE EXAMS SOON, HUH?

Post-Graduation Prospects

	Year	Class	Name
Preference			
FIRST			
SECOND			
THIRD			

GETTING THIS FORM...





BUT I
THINK...

I'LL GIVE
UP ON BE-
COMING A
NOVELIST.

YEAH. I'VE
LOOKED
INTO A
BUNCH OF
PLACES,

YOU'RE
GOING THE
NOVELIST
ROUTE,
TOO, RIGHT,
ASHIHARA-SAN?
GOT ANY
SCHOOLS
IN MIND?

I GUESS
SO, BUT I
HAVEN'T
NARROWED
DOWN
WHERE
EXACTLY
YET.



WHY?! YOU
ALREADY
WROTE SO
MUCH!



HUH
?



YOU
MEAN
LIKE AN
EDITOR
?

SUP-
PORT
?

YEAH.

THAT'S
A GREAT
IDEA!



I FIGURE
IF THERE
ARE PEOPLE
OUT THERE
WHO CAN
WRITE MORE
INTERESTING
STORIES
THAN ME,

THEN I'D
LIKE TO
WORK TO
SUPPORT
THEM.



YOU
KNOW HOW
FUJII-KUN
WON THE
LITERARY
AWARD IN
FEBRUARY?

READING
HIS PIECE,
I REALIZED
I FELT
WAY MORE
MOVED THAN
FRUSTRATED.

I FELT
THE SAME
WAY DURING
HIS AND
SHIBASAKI-
KUN'S
MATCH.



DO YOU HAVE ANY CAREERS IN MIND, MOMO?



I STILL PLAN TO WRITE AS A HOBBY, ANYWAY.

OH, I SAID IT WAS YOUR AWARD THAT MADE ME DECIDE, BUT DON'T FEEL RESPONSIBLE, OKAY?

IF ANYTHING, I'M THANKFUL THAT YOU HELPED OPEN MY EYES.



HUH? SEMPAI'S ACTUALLY A GOOD STUDENT ?!

BAD BAR-USD!

WHAT'S WITH THAT REACTION?

YOU COULD PROBABLY GET INTO A GOOD UNIVERSITY WITH YOUR GRADES, KASHIWABARA-SAN.



SNUGGLER♥

IS THAT A JOB?

THEN MAYBE A WIFE?

HMM. IF I HAVE TO CHOOSE,



PEOPLE ALWAYS TELL ME I LOOK LIKE I'D WORK AT A HOSTESS CLUB.

D-D-DOCTOR MOMO...

HOW ABOUT BECOMING A DOCTOR ?

YOU'RE EASYGOING AND HAVE GOOD INTUITION, SO MAYBE YOU'D MAKE A GOOD RESEARCHER?



BUT ANY-
WHERE
TOO HIGH-
LEVEL
MIGHT BE
PUSHING
IT...

I PROBA-
BLY WON'T
GO TO
COLLEGE.

IT'D BE
GREAT IF
I COULD
GO SOME-
WHERE
CLOSE TO
HOME,



WHERE
YOU'RE
GOING TO
COLLEGE.

I NEVER
EVEN
THOUGHT
ABOUT
MAJORS
AND STUFF
LIKE THAT.

HM?

OH, YEAH.
HAVE YOU
DECIDED
YET?



AND IT'S
NOT LIKE
EVERY JOB
OUT THERE
REQUIRES A
DEGREE.

I MEAN,
THERE ISN'T
REALLY
ANYTHING
I WANT TO
STUDY AT
COLLEGE.



I'M
THINKING
ABOUT IT,
ANYWAY.



SO, YOU'RE
GOING TO
START
WORKING
AS SOON
AS YOU
GRADU-
ATE HIGH
SCHOOL
?



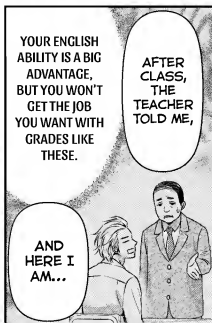
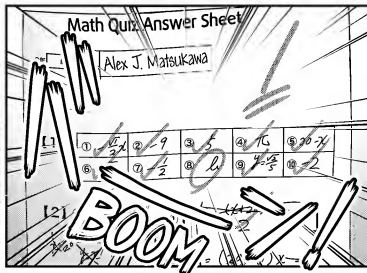
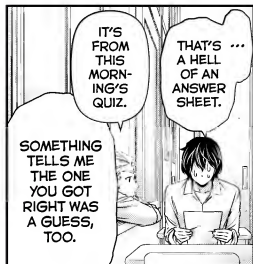
WHY
NOT
?!

HUH
?!

YOU
WON'T...?
WHA?
HUH...?

YOU'RE
OVERRE-
ACTING.





SATUR-
DAY

ISN'T IT
KINDA
EARLY?

UHH...
IT'S ONLY
SEVEN,
Y'KNOW.

I NEED
HELP WITH
A LOT OF
SUBJECTS.

CHEMISTRY,
CLASSICS,
PHYSICS,
POLITICS AND
ECON, WORLD
HISTORY...

THAT'S
EVERYTHING
EXCEPT
ENGLISH!

WHAT
WERE
THEY
AGAIN?
MATH,
JAPA-
NESE,
AND
...?

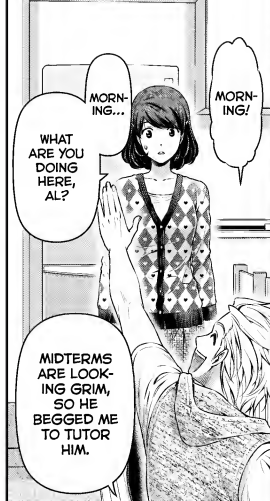
HOWDY!

ARE YOU
NATSUO'S
FRIEND?
WELCOME.

OH!

THANKS
FOR
HAVING
ME.

I DON'T
HAVE A
TABLE IN
MY ROOM,
SO LET'S
SET UP IN
THE LIVING
ROOM.



WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
HERE,
AL?

MORN-
ING...

MORN-
ING!

MIDTERMS
ARE LOOK-
ING GRIM,
SO HE
BEGGED ME
TO TUTOR
HIM.



UH
...
OKAY...

YOU CAN
CHECK
PAGE
126 OF
VOLUME
SIX FOR
DETAILS!

NAT-CHAN
TOLD ME
YOU GUYS
ARE STEP-
SIBLINGS.

UH-
HUH!

WAIT, DID
YOU KNOW
WE'RE LIVING
TOGETHER?



I WAS GOING
TO START
THIS AFTER-
NOON, BUT
THE SOONER
THE BETTER.

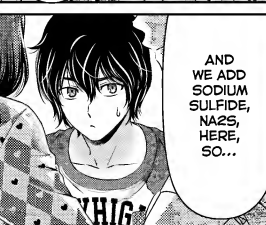
HMM.

I
GUESS
SO.



THE
MORE THE
MERRIER!

DO YOU
WANT TO
STUDY
WITH US,
RUI-CHAN?





I-I'M LISTENING!

REAL-
LY?

THEN
TRY
SOLVING
THIS
PROB-
LEM.



HEY, AL.
ARE YOU
LISTENING?

YOU'VE
JUST BEEN
STARING
AT RUI
THE WHOLE
TIME.



GLARING
AT IT WON'T
MAKE THE
ANSWER
APPEAR.



PHYSI-
CALLY,
I MEAN.

BY THE
WAY,
AREN'T
YOU GUYS
A LITTLE
CLOSE?

YOU
DON'T
HAVE TO
BE THAT
CLOSE
TO HEAR
HER,
RIGHT?



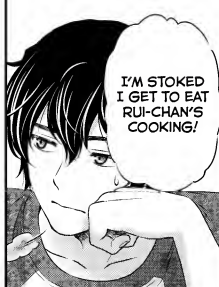
S-
SORRY.

JEEZ...
PAY
ATTEN-
TION.

OKAY,
WE'LL
START
AGAIN
FROM
THE TOP.



ARE YOU HUNGRY? I'M SURE YOU'LL FEEL BETTER IF YOU EAT SOMETHING!



I'M STOKED
I GET TO EAT
RUI-CHAN'S
COOKING!



YAY!

OH, WELL...
IT'S ALMOST
LUNCHTIME
ANYWAY. I'LL
WHIP UP
SOMETHING
SIMPLE.



Fan

Tas

tic!



HERE
YOU GO.



HEH,
HEH. DON'T
CHOKE
NOW.

HAVING
SOMEONE
ENJOY MY
COOKING
THIS MUCH
MAKES IT
WORTH THE
EFFORT.



I'M
AMAZED
YOU CAN
MAKE
SOMETHING
LIKE THIS
IN NO
TIME!

AWESOME!
YOU'RE A
GENIUS!

THIS IS
GOOD,
RUI-CHAN!

SUPER
GOOD!



GINGER
PORK,
HAMBURG
STEAK,
SWEET AND
SOUR PORK.
STUFF LIKE
THAT.

RIU'S
GOOD AT
SEASONING
MEAT
DISHES.

THIS ISN'T
ENOUGH
TO GET AN
IDEA OF HER
SPECIALTY.



WELL,

SHE
MAKES
STUFF
THAT'S
EVEN
BETTER.



I'LL
FINISH
IT FOR
YOU.

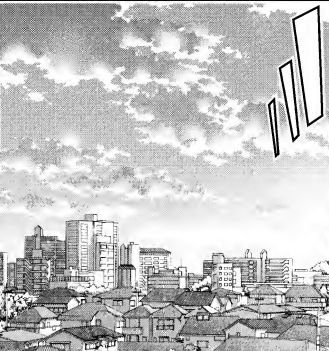
I'M
GUESSING
YOU DON'T
LIKE THIS
THAT MUCH
THEN?

WHA
?!



FROWN

OH, YEAH?
I'D LIKE TO
TRY THEM
SOMETIME.



I NEVER
SAID I
DIDN'T
LIKE IT!

GIVE
IT
BACK,
YOU
HUNG
BLOND
JACKASS!
TOO
LATE,
ALL
GONE!



NOT TO
MENTION
I GOT TO
STUDY WITH
RUI-CHAN
AND
EAT HER
COOKING!

I'M SO
HAPPY I
COULD DIE
TOMORROW
REGRET-
FREE!

WOULDN'T
THAT MAKE
TODAY'S
STUDY
SESSION
POINTLESS?

I FEEL LIKE
TODAY GAVE
MY BRAIN A
BOOST!

THANKS A
MILLION,
NAT-CHAN!

YOU SURE?
THAT
DEFINITELY
DOESN'T
SOUND
SMART...

NO
WOR-
RIES!

WHAT
EX-
ACTLY
...

...DO
YOU LIKE
ABOUT
HER,
ANYWAY?

HEY,

AL
...

...

SKYHI



BUT
THINGS
LIKE HER
KIND-
NESS,

HER
INTELLI-
GENCE,

I MEAN,
IT WAS
LOVE AT
FIRST
SIGHT,

AND HER
COOKING
I GOT TO
TASTE
TODAY.



HUH
?

WHAT
ABOUT
HER?

ALL
SORTS
OF
THINGS.



...I FALL IN
LOVE WITH
HER MORE
AND MORE.

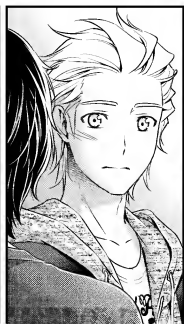
AND
GET TO
KNOW
HER
BETTER
...

EVERY TIME I
EXPERIENCE
A NEW SIDE
OF RUI-CHAN,



BY
THE
WAY,

SOMETHING
CROSSED MY
MIND TODAY.



...

HMM.



BY ANY
CHANCE,

ARE YOU
GONNA
BECOME
MY RIVAL,
NAT-CHAN?



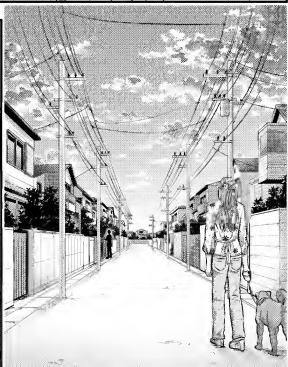
I
JUST
...

...HAVE A
HUNCH.



HUH
?

SKYHIGH





CHAPTER 84: SWEETHEART



NO, NO!
I REALLY
MEAN IT
THIS TIME!

...
BUT
?



1ST LIT.
DEPARTMENT

NICE
WORK!



YOU
DABBLED
IN VARIOUS
GENRES,

BUT I THINK
YOUNG ADULT
FICTION IS
ULTIMATELY
RIGHT UP
YOUR ALLEY.

BUT I
THINK
IT'S YOUR
BEST
WORK
SINCE
THEN.

IT'S NOT AN
EASY TASK
COMING UP
WITH SOME-
THING THAT
SURPASS-
ES YOUR
AWARD
PIECE,

IT WAS A
DISASTER
AND I
ENDED UP
BOTH
REJECTED
AND
FRIENDLESS.

I HAD A
CRUSH ON
MY BEST
FRIEND'S
GIRLFRIEND
IN MIDDLE
SCHOOL,
Y'SEE.

MAAAN.
I KNOW
HOW
THAT
GOES.

YOU'VE
EXPERIENCED
THAT KIND OF
DRAMA, TOO,
TSUTAYA-SAN?

YOUR
USE OF
METAPHORS
IS EXCELLENT
AND MAKES
IT EASY TO
SHARE HIS
PAIN.

TAKE THE
MOMENTS
WHERE THE
PROTAG-
ONIST'S
AMBIVALENCE
COMES INTO
PLAY, FOR
ONE.

THEN I
FEEL LIKE
I HAVE
TO ASK,
FUJII-
KUN.

IF YOU CAN
EXPRESS
THESE KINDS
OF FEELINGS
SO EASILY,

I'M
HOME.

COULD IT
BE YOU
HAVE A
CRUSH ON
SOMEONE
CLOSE TO
YOU?



WE
TALKED
ABOUT MAK-
ING SOME
TWEAKS AND
PUBLISHING
IT AS A
ONE-SHOT.

OH...
HE SAID IT
WAS A LOT
BETTER.

REAL-
LY?!



WEL-
COME
BACK.

HOW'D
HE LIKE
YOUR MANU-
SCRIPT?



THAT'S
GREAT!

WAY
TO
GO!



HUH
?

Y-YEAH
...

I GUESS
THAT HIKE
HELPED PULL
YOU OUT OF
YOUR SLUMP,
AFTER ALL.



I'M GONNA GO OVER MY DRAFT WHILE I'M STILL IN THE MOOD FROM THE MEETING.

OH.

OKAY ...



YEAH, I GRABBED SOMETHING WHILE I WAS OUT SINCE IT WAS LATE.

DID YOU EAT?



COULD IT BE YOU HAVE A CRUSH ON SOMEONE CLOSE TO YOU?



BY ANY CHANCE,

ARE YOU GOING TO BECOME MY RIVAL, NAT-CHAN?



YOU KNOW HOW SOMETIMES YOU GET JEALOUS WATCHING A GOOD FRIEND HAVE FUN WITH ANOTHER FRIEND?

BOF はっ BOF はっ

THEY'RE WRONG!

ANYONE WOULD BE HAPPY TO BE TREATED KINDLY. IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO IT IS!

IT'S LIKE THAT!



No...

...



THUD はっ はっ はっ

MAYBE I
REALLY DO...



MAYBE IT'S
TRUE.



I WON'T

NOT TO
MENTION...

HOLD BACK
FOR HINA-NEE
ANYMORE.



HOW
LOW
CAN I
BE?!

I VOWED
TO BE
WITH HINA
FOREVER!

EVEN
THOUGH
WE BROKE
UP...

WHOA,
WHOA.
THAT
DOESN'T
MAKE IT
COOL TO
LET MYSELF
GET SIDE-
TRACKED!

BUT RUI'S
BEEN BY MY
SIDE EVER
SINCE HINA
LEFT.

IT FEELS
DIFFERENT
FROM WHEN
I FELL IN
LOVE WITH
HINA,



SHE BECAME
AN IRREPLACE-
ABLE PART
OF MY LIFE
BEFORE I
REALIZED IT.



HYPOTHETICALLY,
OKAY?

LET'S
SAY...

LET'S SAY RUI
AND I START
DATING FOR
REAL...



NO LUCK WITH
ONE, SO YOU GO
FOR THE OTHER?

NO-NO
POINT

3.
SHE'S
HINA'S
LITTLE
SISTER.



NAT-CHAN,
YOU TRAITOR!

NO-NO
POINT

2.
SHE'S MY
FRIEND'S
CRUSH.



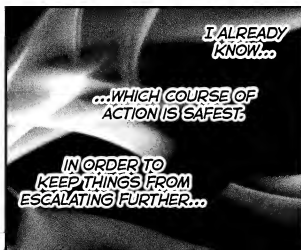
I KNEW GETTING
MARRIED WAS
A BAD IDEA...

NO-NO
POINT

1.
WE'RE
FAMILY.



...



I ALREADY
KNOW...

...WHICH COURSE OF
ACTION IS SAFEST.

IN ORDER TO
KEEP THINGS FROM
ESCALATING FURTHER...



GAAAH!
IT'S A
TERRIBLE
IDEA NO
MATTER
HOW YOU
SLICE IT!

GOING ANY
FURTHER
WOULD
BRING MY
CHARACTER
INTO
QUESTION!

...AT ALL COSTS!

...I HAVE TO
SUPPRESS THESE
FEELINGS...



KNOCK



KNOCK

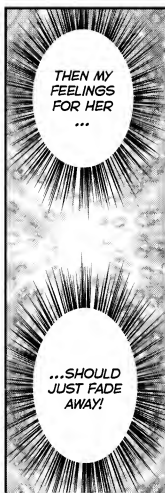
OH
...

I WAS
UP LATE
TWEAKING
MY MANU-
SCRIPT...

HURRY UP
OR WE'LL
BE LATE!

HOW LONG
ARE YOU
GONNA STAY
IN BED?

IT'S
ALMOST
EIGHT.



READ
ALoud
FROM
PAGE
148.

AND THAT
MEANS
YOUR MIND
SHOULD
BE WIDE
AWAKE.

YES,
MA'AM.

I'LL
COME IN
EARLY
STARTING
TOMOR-
ROW...

OH, REALLY?
THEN I
GUESS YOU
GOT MORE
SLEEP THAN
EVERYONE
ELSE HERE.

I...
OVER-
SLEPT.

WHY
WERE
YOU LATE
TODAY?

FWUMP?

OH!

THAT'S
RIGHT!

I'M
IN THE
GROOVE,
SO I'LL
HAVE
DINNER
LATER.

SORRY,
GO ON
HOME
WITHOUT
ME.

AL AND
I MADE
PLANS TO
GO TO
KARAOKE
TODAY!

I HAVE
TO MEET
WITH MY
EDITOR
...

I'M ON
CLASS
DUTY THIS
WEEK, SO
I'M HEAD-
ING OUT
FIRST!

HUH? WE
DIDN'T-

SHUT UP
AND COME
WITH ME!





STARE

...AVOIDING
ME LATELY?

HAVE
YOU
BEEN
...



I HAVE
TO SWITCH
CLASS-
ROOMS
NEXT
PERIOD,
SO I'M
KINDA IN
A HURRY.

GOT A
SEC?

WH-
WHAT'S
UP?



OH
...

FIRST,
TAKE
THIS.

ALSO,

YOU
FORGOT
YOUR
LUNCH.



BA-
DUM

IF YOU HAVE
SOMETHING
TO SAY, THEN
SAY IT.



I SAID
...

WHIP

...IT'S
NOTHING!



HANG ON!
WE'RE NOT
DONE YET!

GRAB

DID I DO
SOME-
THING
WRONG
?!

IF I DID,
THEN JUST
TELL ME!



YOU'RE
JUST
IMAG-
INING
THINGS.

SEE
YA.



I'M NOT
AVOIDING
YOU...

THIS ISN'T
THE FIRST
TIME. DID
YOU PEEP
ON ME
IN THE
BATHROOM
AGAIN?

I
DIDN'T
LAST
TIME,
EITHER!

I
DIDN'T
PEEP!



AH
...



I SEE.

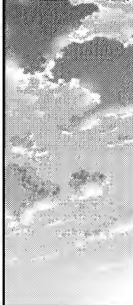
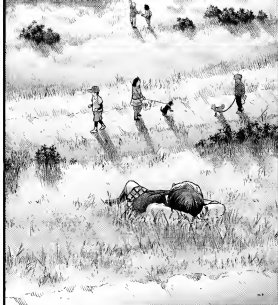
FINE,
THEN.



IF YOU
HATE
ME THAT
MUCH,

THEN
SUIT
YOUR-
SELF!





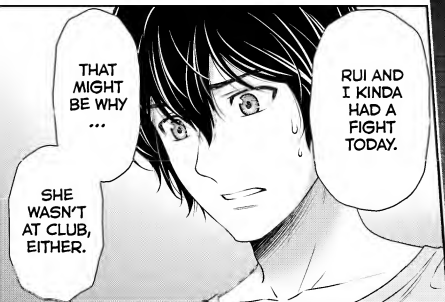
DID SHE
TELL YOU
ANYTHING,
NATSUO-
KUN?

RUI-
CHAN
SURE IS
LATE.

SHE
HASN'T
CALLED,
EITHER.



IT'S
PAST
NINE
...



THAT
MIGHT
BE WHY
...

SHE
WASN'T
AT CLUB,
EITHER.

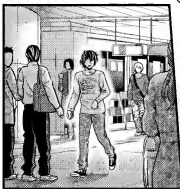
RUI AND
I KINDA
HAD A
FIGHT
TODAY.



I'LL GO
LOOK FOR
HER!

A
FIGHT
?

HUH
?





I WAS WANDERING AROUND HERE AFTER SCHOOL,

AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW, I WAS MISSING ONE.

THE ONE YOU GAVE ME.

I LOST MY HAIR-PIN.

...



IS THAT ALL?



LEAVE IT. I CAN JUST BUY YOU ANOTHER ONE.

NO!

C'MON, LET'S GO—



WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT TIME IT IS?

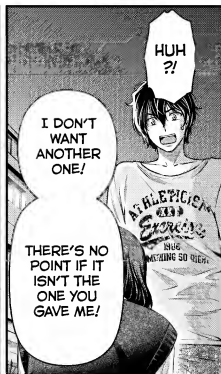


...

I WAS HAPPY...



WHY...?



HUH ?!

I DON'T WANT ANOTHER ONE!

THERE'S NO POINT IF IT ISN'T THE ONE YOU GAVE ME!



...THE
FIRST
TIME YOU
CALLED
ME CUTE.

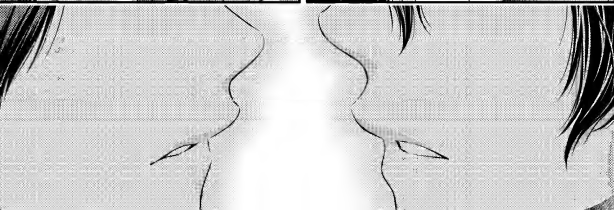
THAT
WAS
...



I'M
BEG-
GING
YOU...

SQUEEZE







...to be continued.

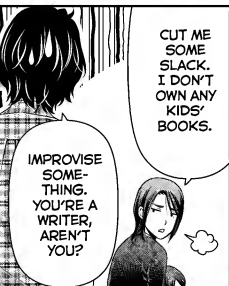
EXTRA MANGA SWEET HOME MAGIC

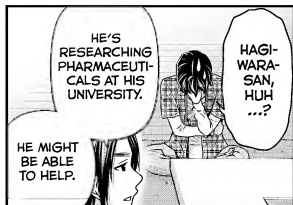
☆ THE STORY SO FAR ☆

A MYSTERIOUS DRUG HAS TURNED
RUI AND HINA INTO CHILDREN. AT A LOSS,
NATSUO TURNS TO KIRIYA FOR HELP...

"YASUE
HUNG HER
HEAD AS
THE WORDS
TUMBLED
FROM HER
LIPS."

"IT'S NOT
ALL YOUR
FAULT."







I DOUBT
HE'LL TRY
TO TAKE
HER FROM
YOU, BUT
ALL RIGHT.

I DON'T
THINK IT'S A
GOOD IDEA TO
LET HIM SEE
HER, EVEN IN
CHILD FORM...



ANYWAY,
I'LL BE
BACK
SOON...



OKAY
?

BE A
GOOD GIRL
AND STAY
HERE WITH
HINA.

I HAVE TO
STEP OUT
FOR A BIT.

RUI
...



IT SEEMS
YOU'LL JUST
HAVE TO SLIP
OUT WHEN
THEY'RE
ASLEEP...

....!

WAAAAH



I'LL
PLAY
WITH
YOU
UNTIL
YOU
DROP!

きゃー
WEE~

GAAAH,
FINE!
HAVE IT
YOUR
WAY!



NOOO!

I DON'T
WANT YOU
TO GOO!



PCAW
PCAW
PCAW



TRANSLATION NOTES



BARUSU, PAGE 51

"Barusu" ("Balse" in the English dub) is the incantation used to destroy the flying castle Laputa in the Studio Ghibli film *Castle in the Sky*. The spelling was kept as "barusu" so that it still functioned as an anagram of Subaru.



FUMIN & BATH ROMAN, PAGE 51

Fumie Hosokawa, also known as Fumin, is a Japanese entertainer who was featured in a long line of commercials for the Bath Roman brand of bath products between 1996-2005.

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